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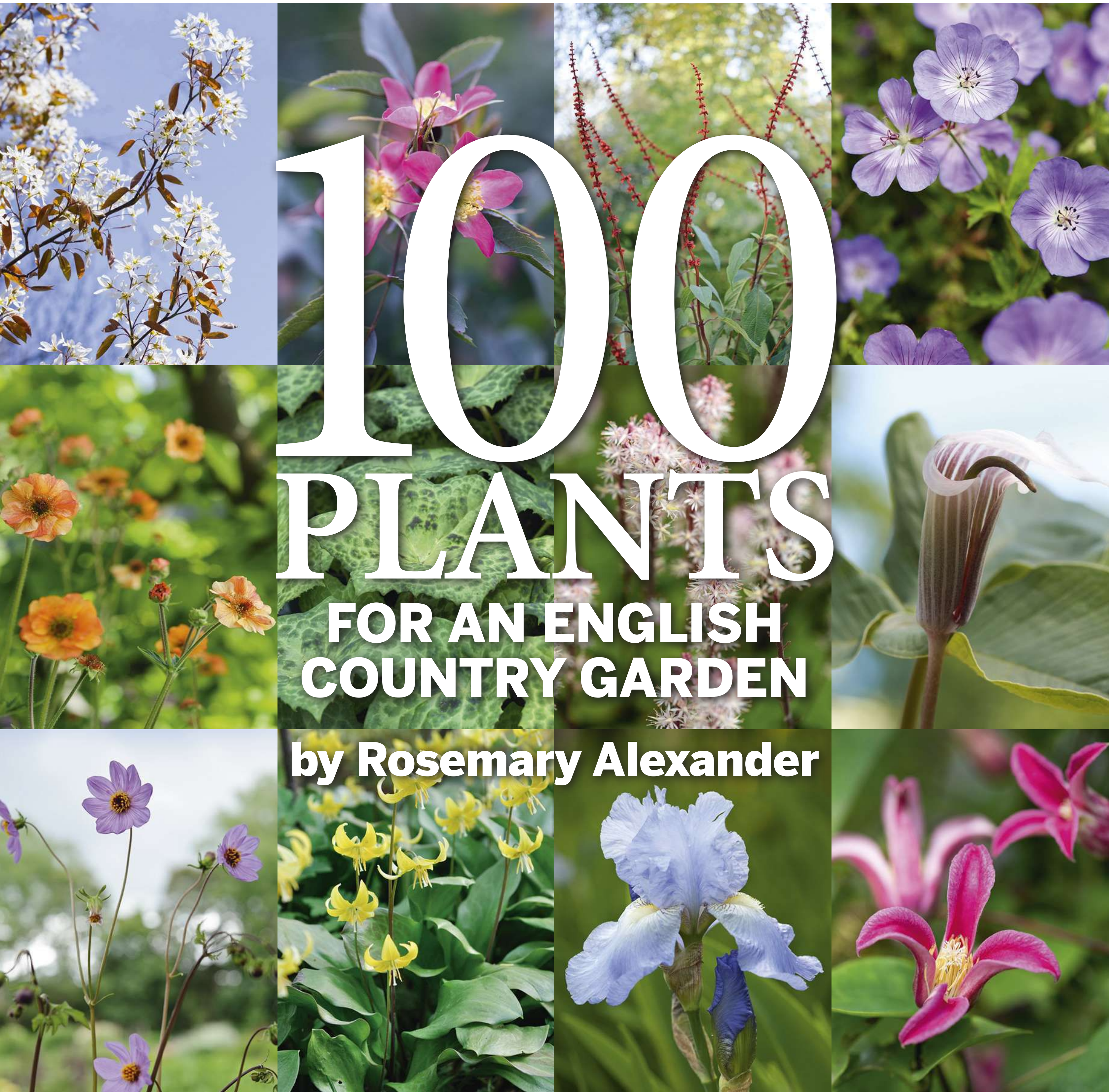

100 PLANTS
FOR AN ENGLISH COUNTRY GARDEN

by Rosemary Alexander

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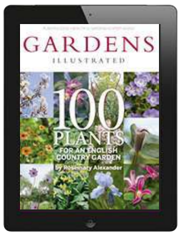
editor's letter

Sharing knowledge – especially that of expert growers and designers – is an important part of our remit at *Gardens Illustrated*. When I took over as editor it became clear that there are countless talented people out there, and being able to facilitate the sharing of their insights never ceases to excite me. For the past few years we've asked a number of luminaries to write a feature looking at 100 great garden plants for our February issue. Previous contributors include Beth Chatto, Piet Oudolf, Dan Pearson and Tom Stuart-Smith. This month, Rosemary Alexander – principal of The English Gardening School, with more than 40 years' experience as a designer and plantswoman – recommends her favourite 100 plants for an English country garden. Head gardener Mat Reese, who trained at Kew and worked at Great Dixter alongside Christopher Lloyd and Fergus Garrett, begins this year's Plantsman's Favourites series; and internationally acclaimed designer and writer Mary Keen begins a four-part series taking an in-depth look at her garden in the Cotswolds. February for me is synonymous with two, albeit disparate, things – snowdrops and marmalade – so I'm delighted that we feature both in this issue. First, we visit Tuinfleur in the Netherlands to explore an outstanding snowdrop collection. Then it's off to Dalemain in the Lake District to sample the world-renowned Marmalade Festival and reveal a couple of very special recipes. I hope you enjoy the issue.

Juliet



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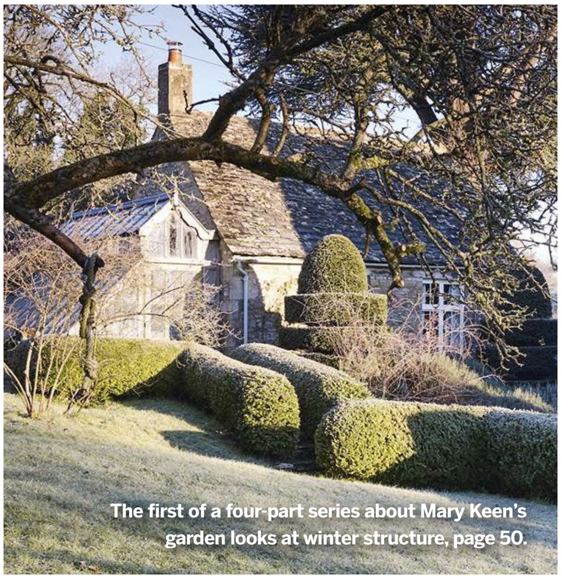

The first of a four-part series about Mary Keen's garden looks at winter structure, page 50.

We share some very special recipes from Dalemain Marmalade Festival, page 68.

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FERGUS GARRETT
Plantsman and head gardener at Great Dixter in East Sussex.

CAROL KLEIN
Plantswoman and presenter of BBC *Gardeners' World*.

DANIEL J HINKLEY
American plantsman, planthunter, horticultural writer and lecturer.

ALYS FOWLER
Kew-trained gardener, author and television presenter.

DAN PEARSON
Garden designer, plantsman and columnist.

JASON INGRAM, ANDREW MONTGOMERY

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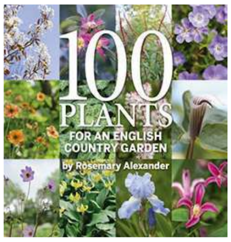

ON THE COVER

100 plants page 37

COVER IMAGES

Rosemary Alexander's 100 great plants. Photography by Jon Stokes, Steffen Hauser/Botanikfoto and C-Images, all from Alamy Stock Pictures; Dianna Jazwinski, Mark Bolton and Nicola Stocken, all from GAP Photos; Mark Winwood, Getty Images; Jason Ingram; and Torie Chugg

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68 **House of orange** Oranges really are the only fruit for gardener, cook and historian Jane Hasell-McCosh. Her obsession with rescuing marmalade from its place as the preserve of Peruvian bears has culminated in an annual festival held in her Cumbrian home

74 **As white as snow** Visitors from around the world flock to the long, narrow garden of Rika and Pieter van Delden in the Netherlands. In summer they come to see the colourful planting but it's the carpet of pure white snowdrops that lures them at this time of year

SIETSKE DE VRIES, ANNAÏCK GUITTENY

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5 free issues*
when you subscribe
to *Gardens Illustrated*
SEE PAGE 32

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ANDREW MONTGOMERY, JASON INGRAM

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- Book your place on the new **Masterclasses** in association with *Gardens Illustrated*– page 11
- Join us on a tour of some of the best **gardens in Wiltshire** – page 13
- Receive **five free issues*** when you subscribe to *Gardens Illustrated* – page 32
- Save **15% on plants** from Crocus – page 111

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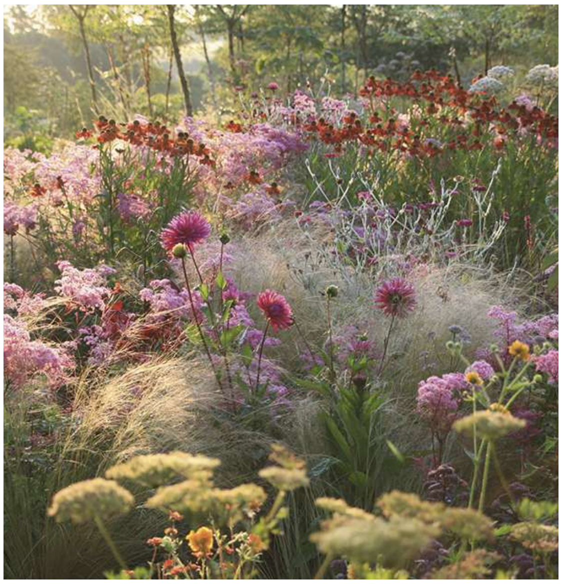

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contributors

JASON INGRAM

MARY KEEN

Mary has worked for many years as a garden designer in Great Britain and abroad, but her own patch is her favourite project, as the first in a series of four visits to her Cotswold garden shows (page 50). The author of six books, she is a champion of the working gardener.

"The gardens I love best are personal. They are made more with the heart than the head."

ROSEMARY ALEXANDER

Rosemary trained as a landscape architect, then went on to found The English Gardening School in 1983. Now addicted to plants, she uses her own garden to experiment with newcomers. She shares her 100 best-loved plants on page 37.

"My own garden is my laboratory, and I enjoyed choosing the 100 plants that give me the most seasonal pleasure."

ANNAÏCK GUITTENY

Annaïck is a photographer who travels all over the UK and Europe, especially France, her home country, to photograph gardens and plant profiles. She loves shooting close-ups of flowers to reveal their intricate details and shape. See her take on camellias on page 60.

"'I was fascinated by the profusion of flowers and colours produced by the camellias, brightening up the gloom of winter."

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

MAT REESE

Mat is head gardener at Malverleys where for the past six years he has been designing and building a notable new English flower garden. Over the year Mat will introduce us to some of his favourite plants, kicking off with some colour for late winter and early spring on page 24.

"I love plants for their own sake, but they must earn their keep in the garden as well."

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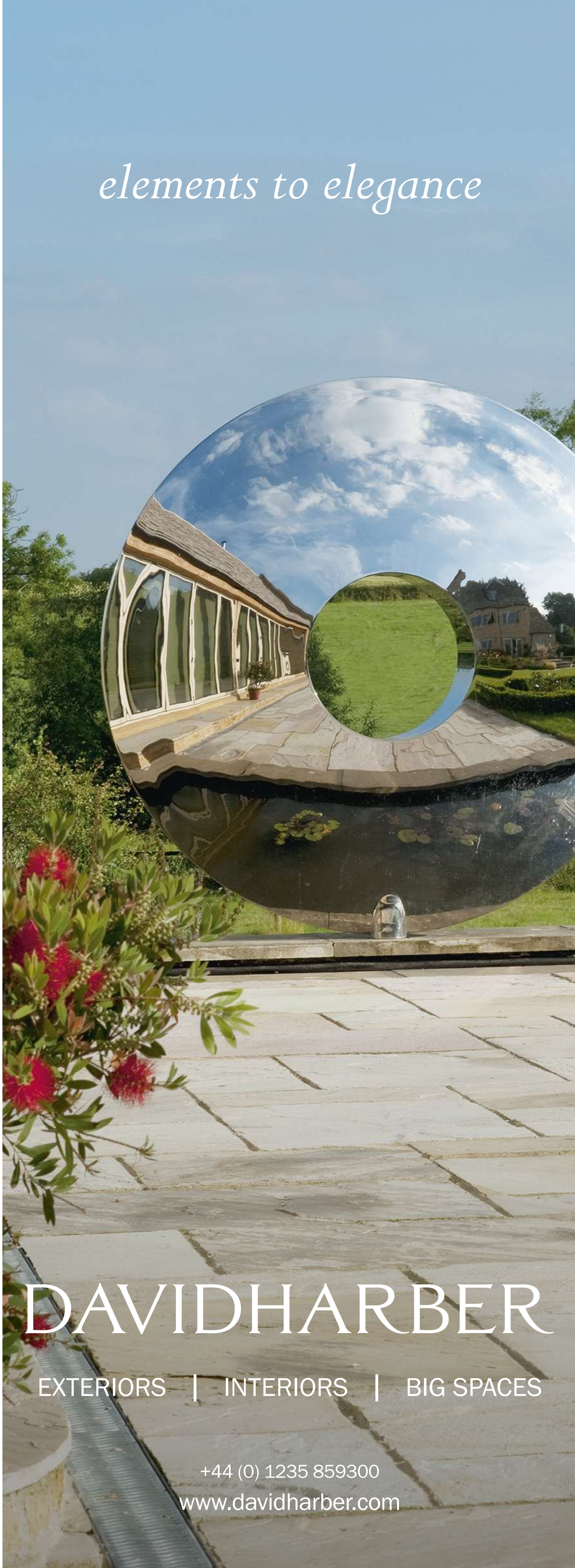

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Speakers for 2017 include: James Alexander-Sinclair, Julian and Isabel Bannerman, Jinny Blom, Val Bourne, Helen Dillon, Nigel Dunnett, Marina Christopher, Alys Fowler, Annie Guilfoyle, Andy Hamilton, Mary Keen, Noël Kingsbury, Roy Lancaster, Arne Maynard, Jekka McVicar, Ann-Marie Powell, Sarah Raven, Tim Richardson, Charlie Ryrie, Troy Scott Smith, Tom Stuart-Smith, Cleve West

For booking and details of all events go to

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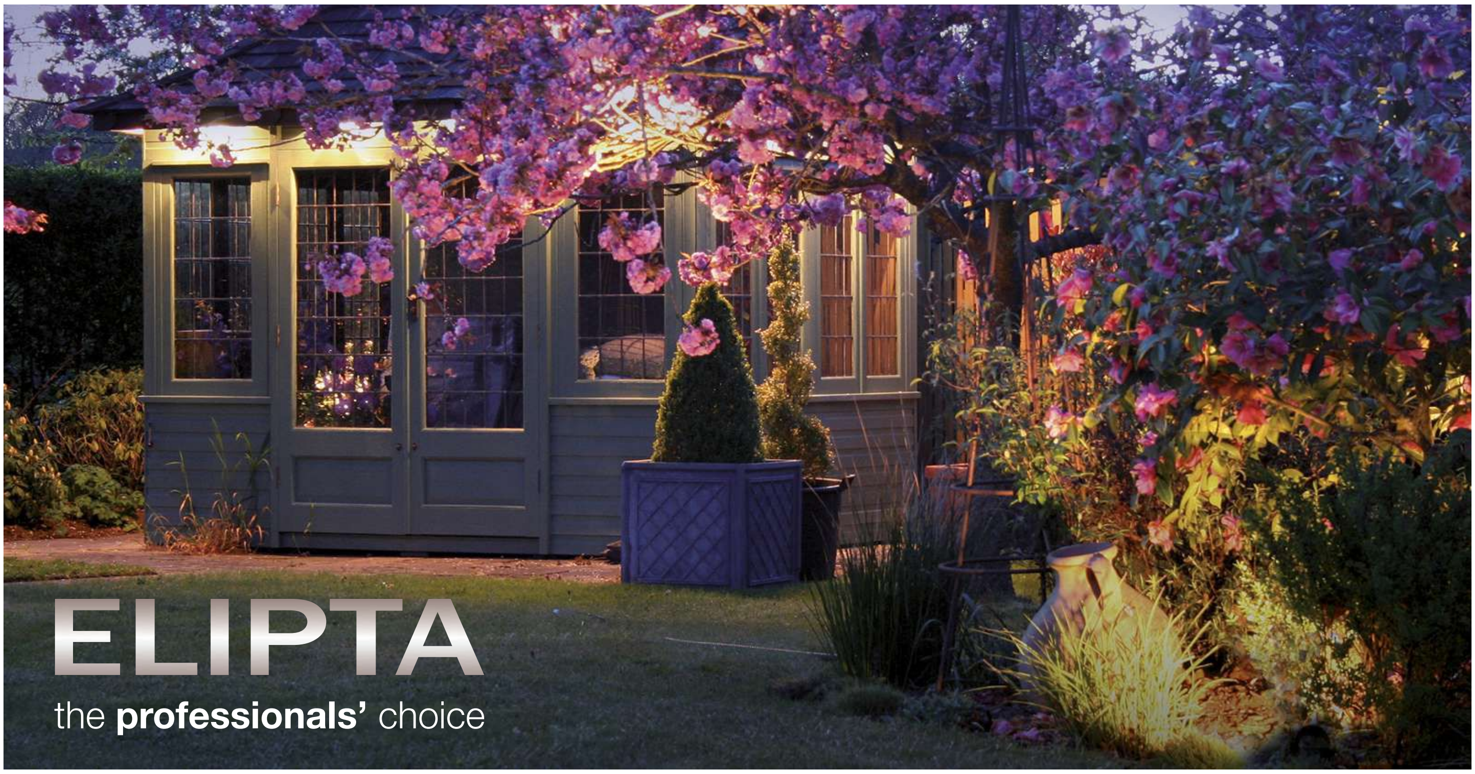
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Garden Masterclasses aim to bring together gardeners and designers with some of the most innovative people in the gardening world through one-day workshops. Each workshop is organised around a specific topic, and designed to help students learn and practise. With quality catering, in garden or nursery venues, we hope that students will have a good day out too, meeting other passionate gardeners, and sharing experiences.

"We have put together this programme because we felt there was a real lack of learning opportunities for amateur gardeners (and indeed for professionals). There are plenty of gardening societies and garden schools that offer opportunities to hear lectures, but relatively few that offer a more active approach to learning. Our aim is to offer a learning experience where there is a more interactive approach, with smaller groups, opportunities to ask questions and have a go."

ANNIE GUILFOYLE AND NOËL KINGSBURY, MASTERCLASS ORGANISERS

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The Coach House Garden, Gloucestershire (6).
Pruning – a beginner's guide, with Mary Payne.
- **WEDNESDAY 3 MAY** (10am-4.30pm) **£90**
Yeo Valley Organic Garden, Somerset (6).
The Rabbit's Eye View – learning about long-term plant performance, with Noël Kingsbury.
- **TUESDAY 9 MAY** (10am-4.30pm) **£110**
Easton Walled Gardens, Lincolnshire (3).
On the Edge of Wild – creating a natural garden without compromising beauty, with Matthew Wilson and Ursula Cholmeley.
- **TUESDAY 13 JUNE** (10am-4.30pm) **£130**
Darsham Nurseries, Suffolk (4).
Successful Planting – a day with Xa Tollemache and Christine Walkden.
- **WEDNESDAY 21 JUNE** (10am-4.30pm) **£90**
Walled Garden Treberfydd, Powys (5).
Selecting and Composing with Plants – Noël Kingsbury and Sarah Price.
- **WEDNESDAY 26 JULY** (10am-4.30pm) **£130**
Yeo Valley Organic Garden, Somerset (7).
Garden Through the Lens – a photography workshop with Jason Ingram and editorJuliet Roberts looks at how to get your garden featured in the press.
- **TUESDAY 1 AUGUST** (10am-4.30pm) **£110**
Parham House and Gardens, West Sussex (9).
Extending Late Summer and Autumn Interest in the Garden – with Marina Christopher and Tom Brown.
- **TUESDAY 15 AUGUST** (10am-4.30pm) **£110**
Easton Walled Gardens, Lincolnshire (3).
Getting to Grips with Perennials – what to use where and when, with Rosy Hardy and Ursula Cholmeley.
- **WEDNESDAY 20 SEPTEMBER** (10am-4.30pm) **£90**
The Restoration Yard, Dalkeith, Edinburgh (1).
Scottish Gardens Looking Forward – with James Alexander-Sinclair, Gavin McNaughton and Colin McBeath.
- **MONDAY 9 OCTOBER** (10am-4.30pm) **£120**
Bury Court, Hampshire (8).
In the Mind's Eye – a workshop to enrich your analytical understanding of garden design, with Sarah Eberle.
- **WEDNESDAY 11 OCTOBER** (10am-4.30pm) **£110**
Easton Walled Gardens, Lincolnshire (3).
What makes a successful garden? – find the answers at a design workshop, with Annie Guilfoyle and Ursula Cholmeley.
- **THURSDAY 12 OCTOBER** (10am-4.30pm) **£90**
Scampston Walled Garden, North Yorkshire (2).
The Immersive Experience – dynamic planting design at the human scale with Nigel Dunnett.
- **WEDNESDAY 18 OCTOBER** (10am-4.30pm) **£120**
Bury Court, Hampshire (8).
Using Grasses and Perennials in the Modern Landscape – a practical and inspirational day with Neil Lucas.

For booking and details of all workshops go to
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Workshops with James Alexander-Sinclair, Tom Brown, Ursula Cholmeley, Marina Christopher, Nigel Dunnett, Sarah Eberle, Annie Guilfoyle, Rosy Hardy, Jason Ingram, Noël Kingsbury, Neil Lucas, Colin McBeath, Gavin McNaughton, Mary Payne, Sarah Price, Juliet Roberts, Xa Tollemache, Christine Walkden and Matthew Wilson.

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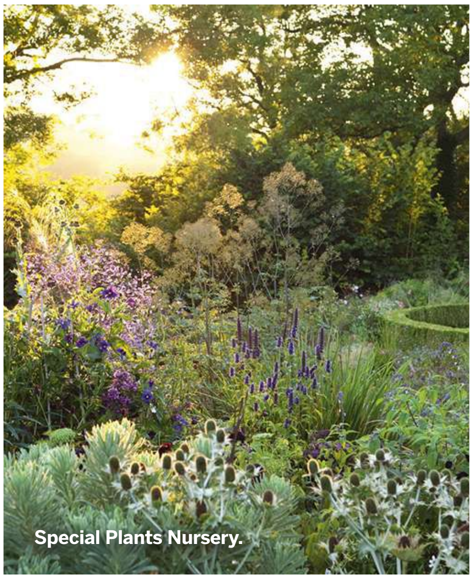
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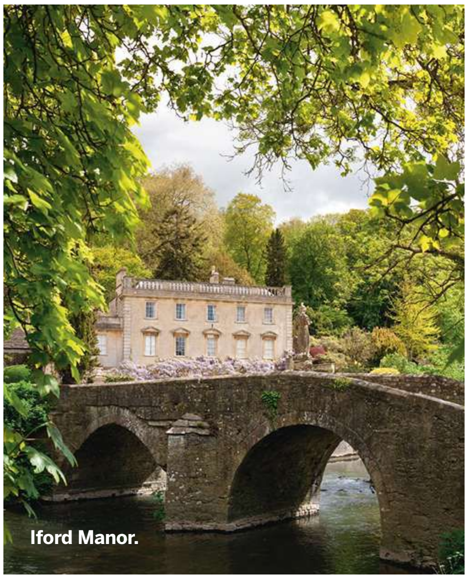
Iford Manor.

Bowood House.

The Courts Garden.

18-21 September 2017

Gardens of Wiltshire

Discover a selection of English country gardens, including a day spent with designer Tania Compton allowing us exclusive access to some of the county's finest private gardens

The southern English county of Wiltshire contains many World Heritage Sites including Stonehenge, Avebury and Salisbury Cathedral. Almost half the county is designated as an area of outstanding natural beauty, so it is not surprising to find such a collection of outstanding gardens.

Our trip includes visits to **The Courts**, a country garden of perfect harmony with lots of late-summer interest. There's also the iconic Italianate garden at **Iford Manor**, designed by Harold Peto. Nestled on the hillside overlooking the river Frome, this is an exceptional garden and one that invites lingering. At **Bowood House**, we have an invitation to view Lord and Lady Lansdowne's private walled garden with its formal borders and productive kitchen garden. There's also **Cantax House**, **Ridleys Cheer** and an inspiring visit to renowned plantswoman, Derry Watkins' garden and nursery **Special Plants**.

Particular highlights, though, come when we are joined by Tania Compton, garden designer and author of the recently published *The Private Gardens of England*. Together we visit two gardens designed by Tania: **Fonthill House**, the home of Lord and Lady Margadale, and **Spilsbury Farm** where Tania lives with her husband the botanist Dr James Compton. Then it's on to **Moor Hatches**, a contemporary family garden designed by Tom Stuart-Smith. Such access is a rare treat.

We are accommodated for three nights at **The Manor House** hotel, set in the heart of Castle Combe – frequently referred to as the prettiest village in England – this is a stylish, comfortable hotel offering fine food and a peaceful ambience.

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TOUR LEADERS

Tania Compton's garden design career began at The English Gardening School. She is a trustee of the Garden Museum and a writer. Her latest book is *The Private Gardens of England*.

Dr Sophie Piebenga trained as a gardener at the National Trust and Kew Gardens. She then followed an interest in the conservation of historic landscapes and gardens, which included studying for a doctorate.

Booking details

Price £1,998 per person, based on two people sharing (a single supplement of £220 will be levied by the hotel). The price includes: three nights bed and breakfast at The Manor House, Castle Combe; two evening meals with wines at the hotel and one at an excellent local inn; plus four lunches and transport from Chippenham Railway Station. The price does not include extras at the hotel, or travel insurance.

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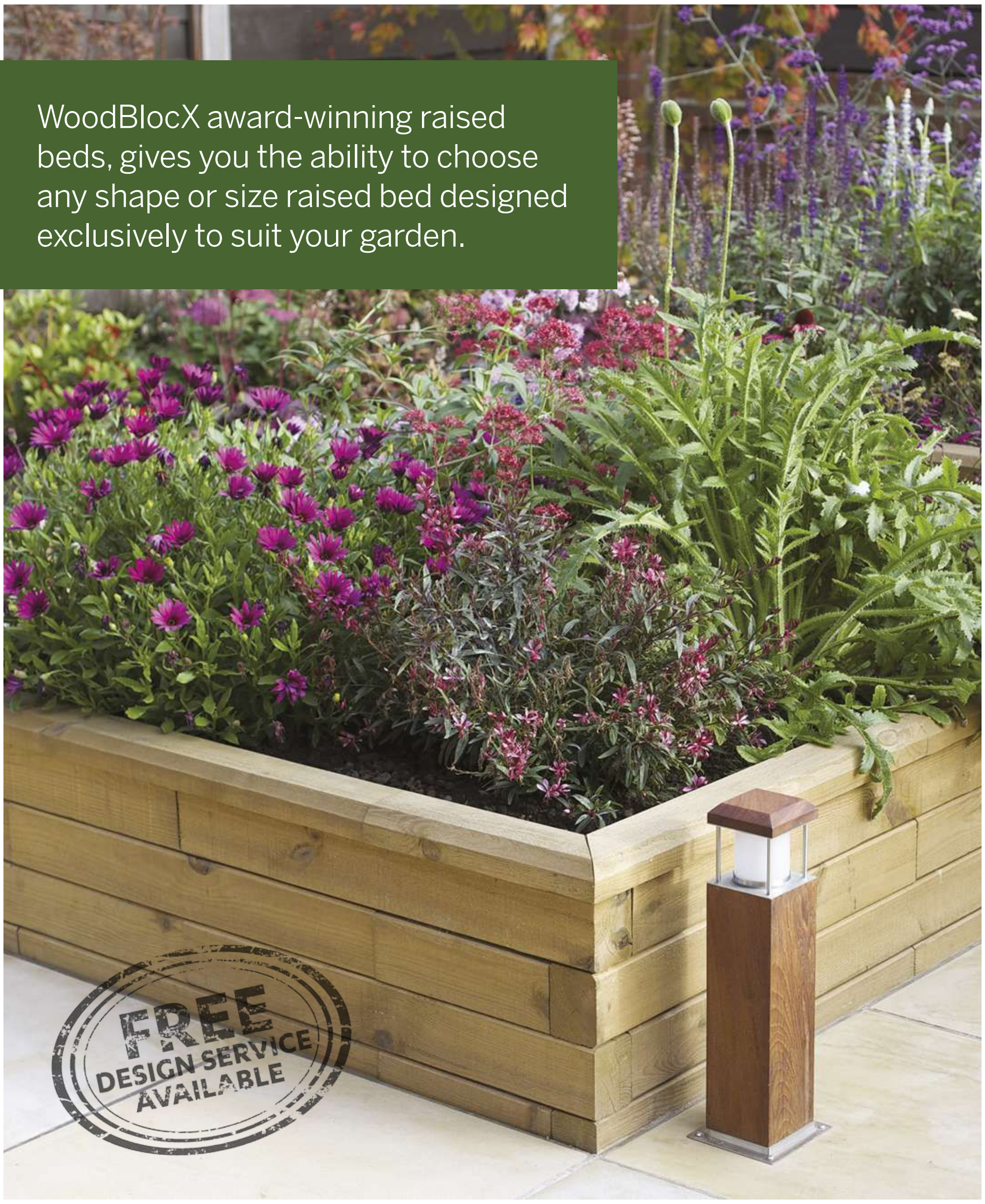

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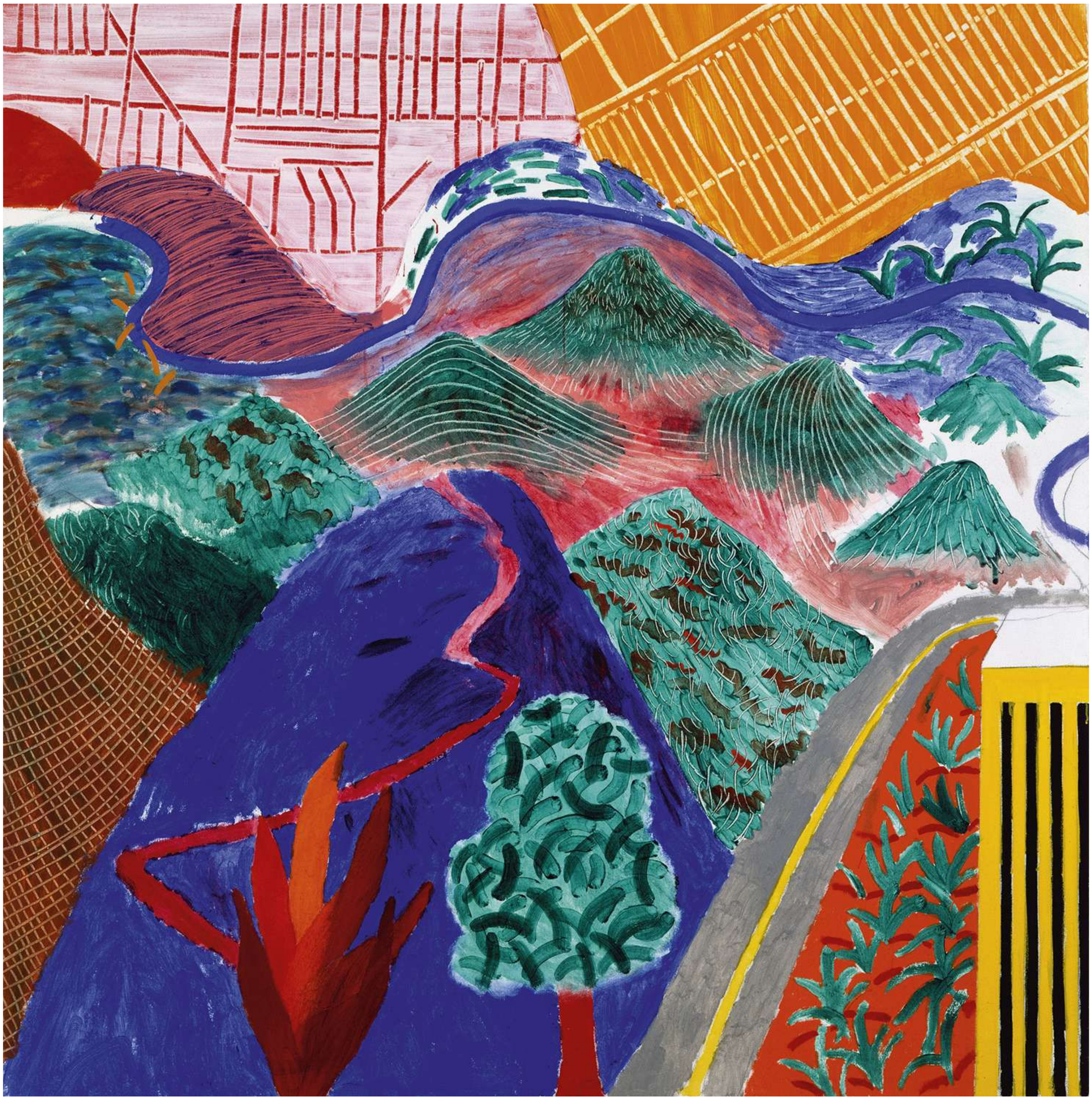
Dig in

What's happening, where to go, what's in flower and what to buy this month

NEWS COMPILED BY ALYS HURN



OUTPOST DRIVE, HOLLYWOOD 1980, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 60 X 60", © DAVID HOCKNEY

NEW EXHIBITION

A life in pictures

This month, London's Tate Britain opens the world's most extensive retrospective of British artist David Hockney, who celebrates his 80th birthday this year. Presented as a chronological overview, the exhibition, organised in collaboration with the Centre Pompidou and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, brings together six decades of the artist's work for the first time. Loans from private collections, including artwork never displayed in public before, will join iconic paintings from museums around the world. 9 February – 29 May. **tate.org.uk**

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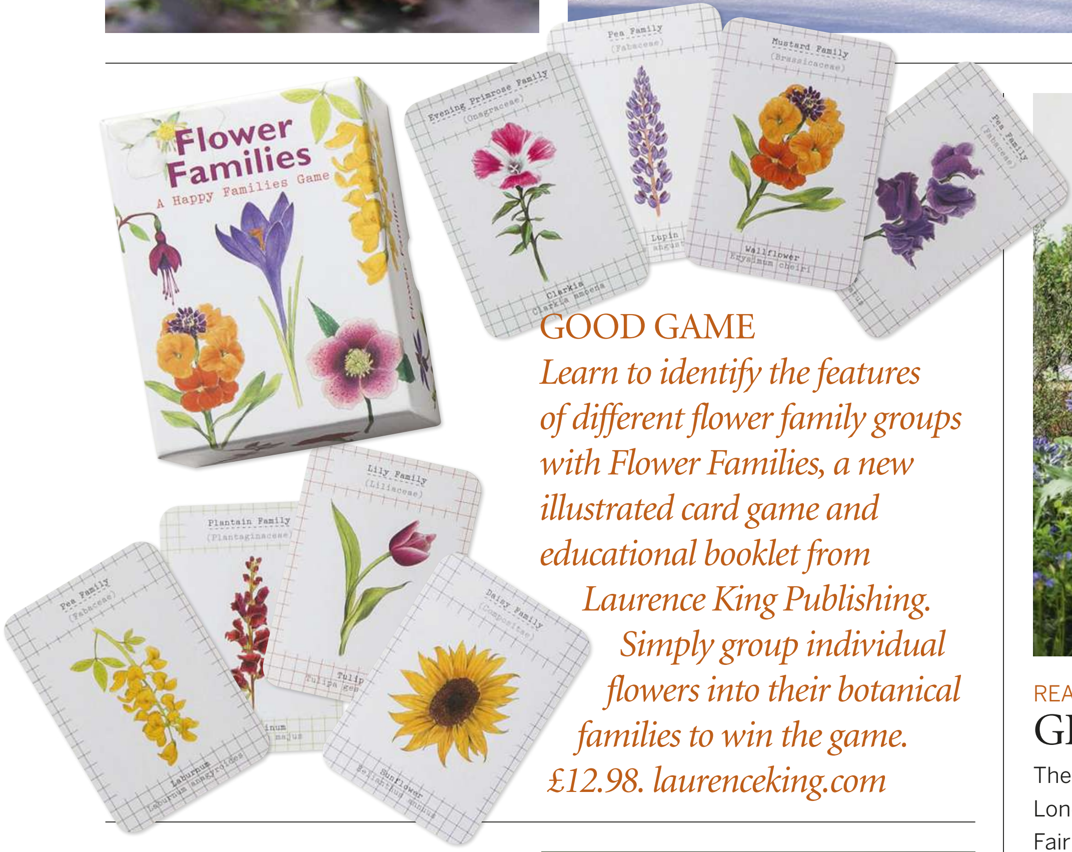
SNOWDROP WEEKENDS

Winter wonderland

Holker Gardens in Cark-in-Cartmel, Cumbria, will open for two weekends this month to celebrate the arrival of snowdrops in the garden. Last open during February in 2011, the snowdrop weekends offer visitors a rare opportunity to see Holker during wintertime. 17-19 February and 24-26 February. Entry is £8.50. Visit **holker.co.uk** for more details.


Flower Families
A Happy Families Game
Evening Primrose Family (Onagraceae)
Clarkia
Pea Family (Fabaceae)
Lupin
Mustard Family (Brassicaceae)
Wallflower
Erysimum cheiri
Pea Family (Fabaceae)
Lily Family (Liliaceae)
Tulip
Plantain Family (Plantaginaceae)
Pea Family (Fabaceae)
Laburnum
Daisy Family (Compositae)
Sunflower

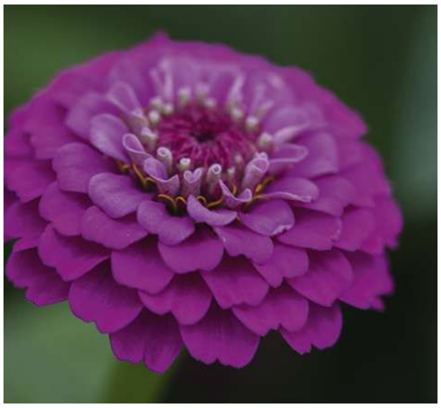
GOOD GAME

Learn to identify the features of different flower family groups with Flower Families, a new illustrated card game and educational booklet from Laurence King Publishing. Simply group individual flowers into their botanical families to win the game. £12.98. laurenceking.com

NEW PLANT

Purple perfection

With small, pompom-like, purple flowers and strong stems, *Zinnia elegans* 'Lilliput Purple' from Chiltern Seeds is perfect for cut-flower displays. The plant grows to around 60cm in height and prefers well-drained soil in full or sheltered sun. £1.50 from each packet sold will go to the charity Thrive, which aims to bring about positive changes to people's lives through gardening. £1.95. **chilternseeds.co.uk**



READER OFFER

GROW London

The contemporary garden fair GROW London has joined the Spirit of Summer Fair and the House Fair as part of a new House and Garden Festival at Olympia, London, 21-24 June. The festival will be packed with stylish garden, interior and lifestyle products, and features a range of talks and workshops. Advance tickets cost £16 but *Gardens Illustrated* readers can enjoy a 2-for-1 early bird ticket offer by quoting 'GILL' when prompted. Tickets can be booked online or over the phone. Offer begins 6 February at 10am and ends 6 March at 5pm. Tel 0844 412 4623, **houseandgardenfestival.com**

Solanum tuberosum 'Highland Burgundy Red'.

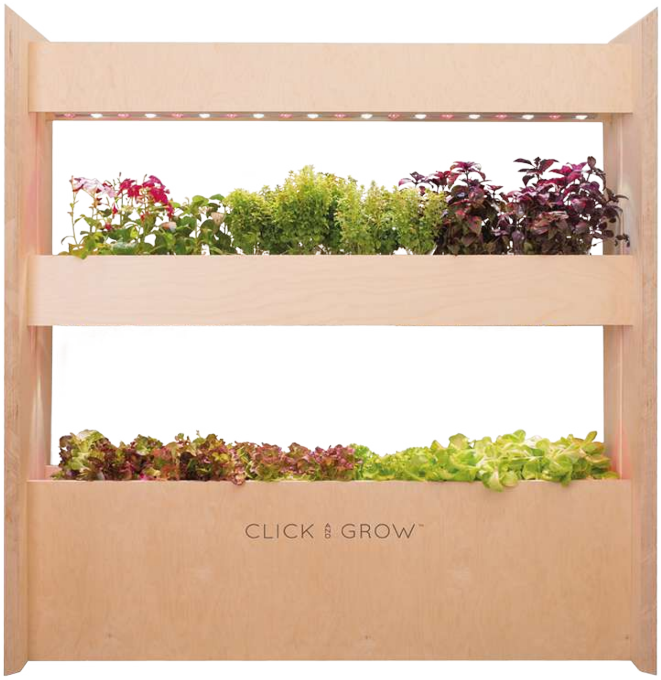
CHITTING POTATOES

Prepare your spuds for planting

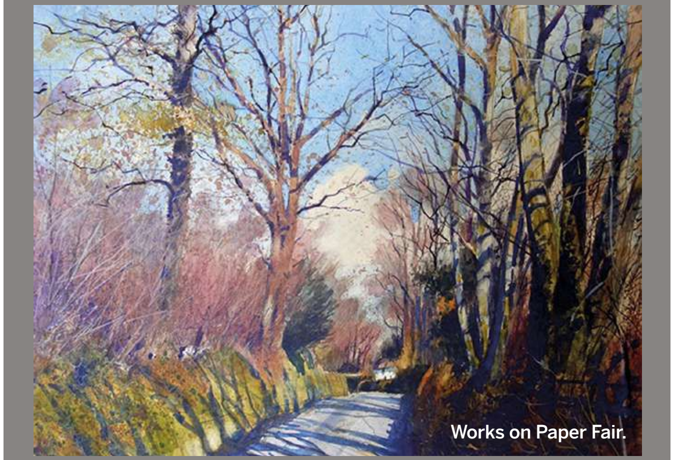
Now is the time to start choosing your chitting potato tubers ready for planting in April. By encouraging tubers into growth you give your potatoes a head start and promote a higher yield. Organic Plants has a good range of seed potatoes, including heritage and speciality types. Order now for delivery from mid February to allow time for chitting. **organicplants.co.uk**

SMART GARDENING

The Wall Farm Mini from Click & Grow is an indoor food production system that allows you to grow plants with ease. The farm has space for 34 plants and features biodegradable Smart Soil, a grow light and built-in watering system. Choose plants from the online selection or buy seedless Smart Soil and grow what you like. Prices start at $699. clickandgrow.com



Diary



Works on Paper Fair.

- **Organic Veg Growing and Planning**

An introductory course on how to start planning an organic garden based around you and your own gardening situation. 8 February, 10am-4pm. £60. Ryton Gardens, Wolston Lane, Warwickshire CV8 3LG. Tel 024 7630 3517, gardenorganic.org.uk

- **Works on Paper Fair**

View and buy early, Victorian, modern and contemporary art from leading dealers, including drawings, original prints, watercolours and posters. 9-12 February. £20. Royal Geographical Society, Exhibition Road, London SW7 2QJ. Tel 01798 215007, worksonpaperfair.com

- **Willow Garden Structures Workshop**

Learn to make beautiful plant supports, plant climbers and trellises for the garden using natural willow stems with willow-weaving expert Helen Lomberg. All materials provided. 11 February, 10am-4.30pm. £130. Waterperry Gardens, Near Wheatley, Oxfordshire OX33 1JZ. Tel 01844 339254, waterperrygardens.co.uk

- **Early Spring Plant Fair**

The first RHS show of the year, with gold-medal winning nurseries, expert advice and new and unusual plants to view and buy. 14-15 February, 10am-5pm. From £5. RHS Lawrence Hall, London SW1P 2QD and RHS Lindley Hall, London SW1P 2QW. Tel 020 3176 5800, rhs.org.uk

- **Listed Property Show**

If you are maintaining, altering or renovating a listed home or looking to buy one, the Listed Property Show offers information and expert advice from the best in the industry. 18-19 February, 10am-5pm (4pm Sunday). Free entry. Olympia London, Hammersmith Road, Kensington, London W14 8UX. Tel 01795 844939, lpoc.co.uk

- **Grow Your Own Wedding Flowers**

A bespoke course to teach you all you need to know about growing your own wedding flowers, with practical advice on planning, sowing and designing displays. 25 February, 10am-4pm. £90. RHS Garden Wisley, Wisley Lane, Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB. Tel 020 3176 5830, rhs.org.uk

PICTURE PARTNERS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; RICHARD THORN (1952-), *TALL TREES*, WATERCOLOUR 34.3 X 34.3CM, £1,400. TO BE EXHIBITED BY JOHN ROBERTSON FINE

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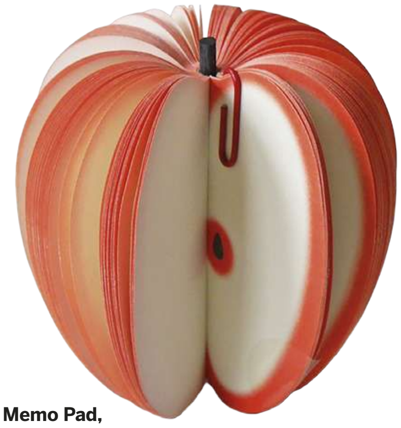
Shop front

A little bit of colour goes a long way to beat the February blues

COMPILED BY ALYS HURN



Apple Memo Pad,
£3.95, easternbiological.co.uk

Herbarium Cushion,
£36, 0333 212 1915,
heals.com

Barrington Flared Plant Support,
£48, 01993 845559,
gardentrading.co.uk

Merino and Cashmere Herringbone Throw in pink and red, £139,
0333 212 1915, heals.com

Apana Oblong Turquoise and Pink Bike Basket,
£69, 01608 239482, thebasketroom.com

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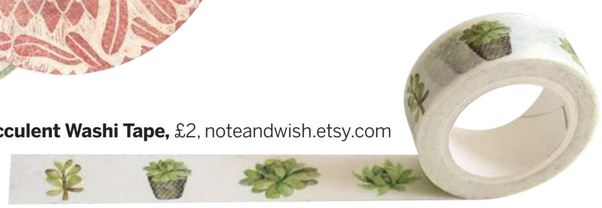
Chelsea Jar No.14 (Ruby) by Michael Ruh,
£340, 020 7148 3190,
thenewcraftsmen.com

Pair of Cotton Bowl Covers,
£11, 01844 217060,
henandhammock.co.uk

Leather Garden Secateurs,
£75, 0844 848 4000,
conranshop.co.uk



Succulent Washi Tape, £2, noteandwish.etsy.com

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Shop front

Time to get organised

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looptheloop.co.uk

Rattan Umbrella Basket,
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worm.co.uk

Cotton Twill Dungarees,
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manufactum.co.uk

Aldsworth Shelf Ladder,
£155, 03456 049049,
johnlewis.com

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electricdaisyflowerfarm.co.uk

Bucket with
Wooden Handle,
£15, 020 7729 6253,
labourandwait.co.uk

Morro Metal Boxes (set of 2),
£26.95, 0333 400 0464, ethicalsuperstore.com

Green Textured Pot, £20,
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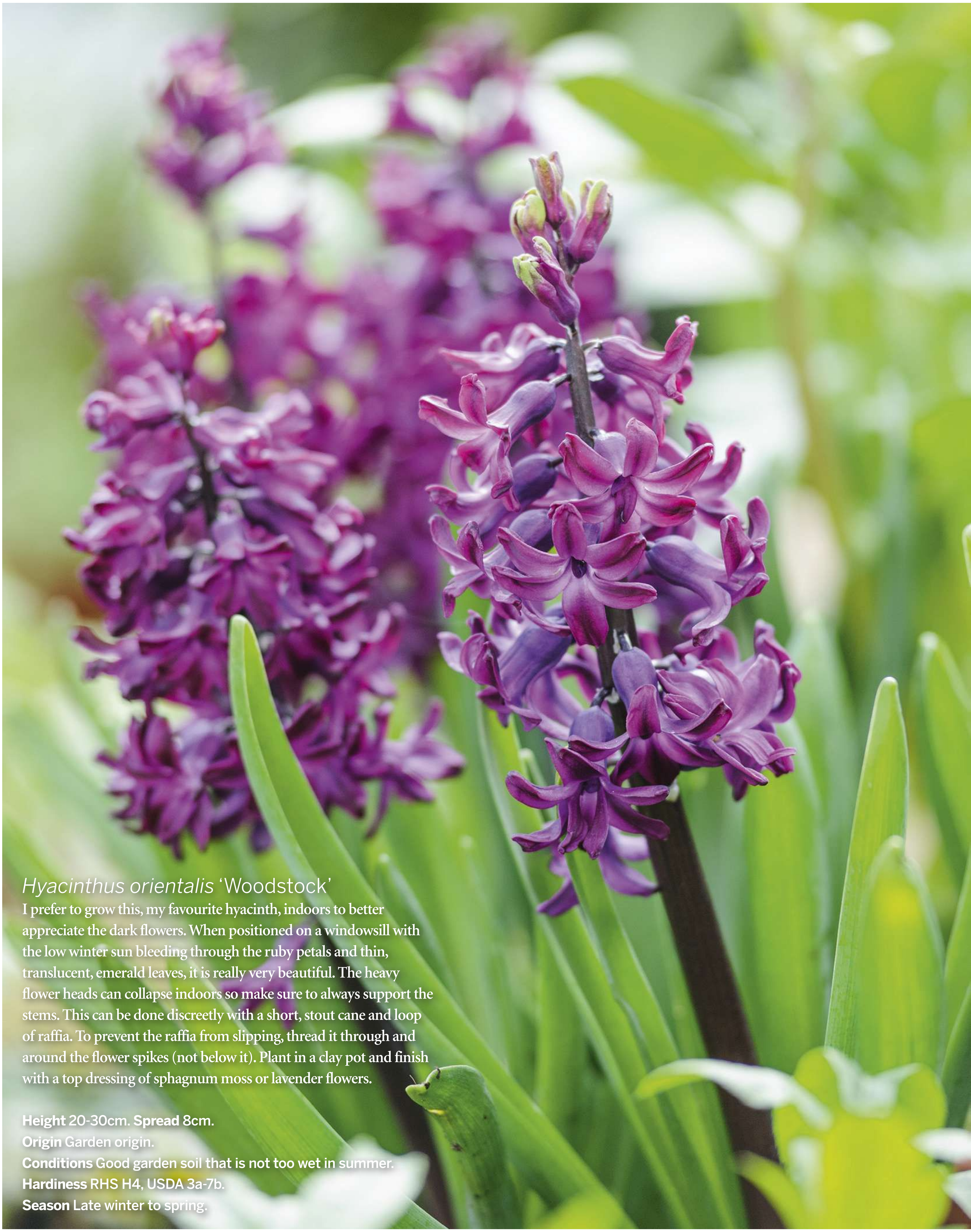


Hyacinthus orientalis 'Woodstock'

I prefer to grow this, my favourite hyacinth, indoors to better appreciate the dark flowers. When positioned on a windowsill with the low winter sun bleeding through the ruby petals and thin, translucent, emerald leaves, it is really very beautiful. The heavy flower heads can collapse indoors so make sure to always support the stems. This can be done discreetly with a short, stout cane and loop of raffia. To prevent the raffia from slipping, thread it through and around the flower spikes (not below it). Plant in a clay pot and finish with a top dressing of sphagnum moss or lavender flowers.

Height 20-30cm. **Spread** 8cm.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Good garden soil that is not too wet in summer.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 3a-7b.
Season Late winter to spring.

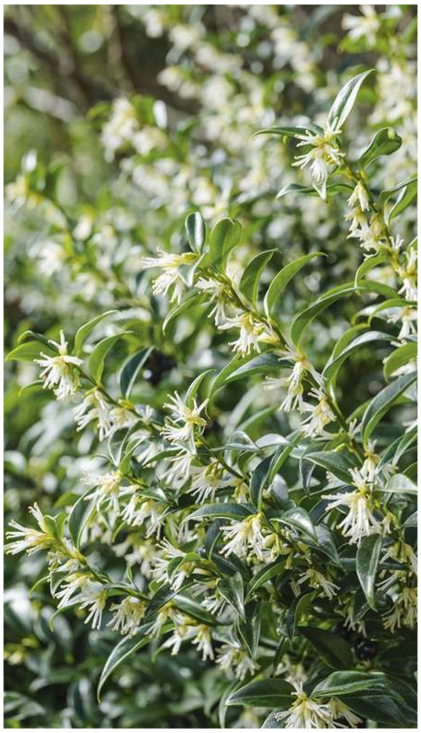
ANDREW MONTGOMERY

February plants

In the first of a year-long series, head gardener Mat Reese chooses ten of his favourite plants to bring some cheer to the cold days of February

WORDS MAT REESE PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM

Mat Reese
is head gardener at Malverleys, a private garden in Hampshire.



Sarcococca confusa

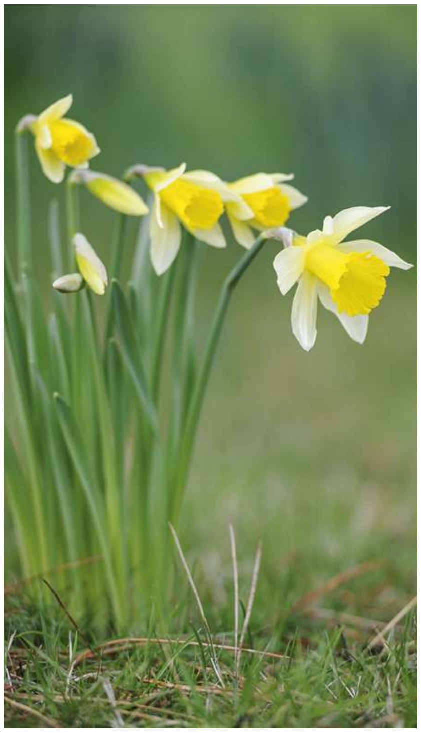
Sweet box is a dense, smart-looking shrub covered from head to toe in small, lustrous leaves held on flexible green twigs. At Malverleys it grows next to the north side of the house beneath a strawberry tree where in midwinter it produces insignificant flowers in the leaf axils that exude a strong, rich scent for well over a month, and prompts even the builders to enquire after the source. Plants require shelter from the sun as too much light can turn the leaves a sickly shade of yellow. Once established, it is one of the best shrubs for dry shade. AGM*.

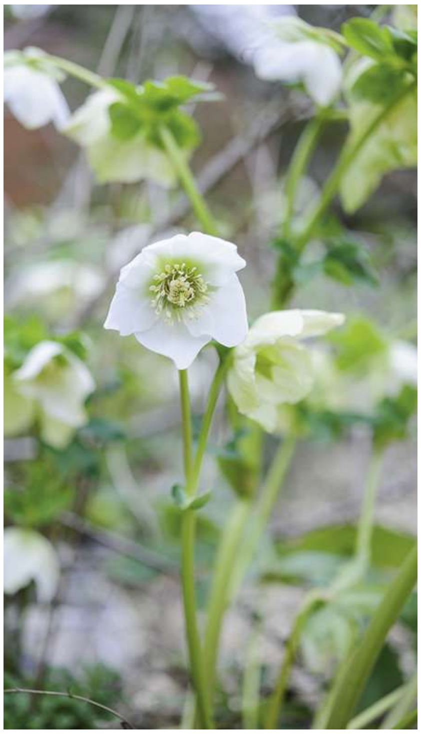
Height 1.7m. **Spread** 1.5m.
Origin China.
Conditions Good soil; broken shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.
Season Winter into spring.

Narcissus lobularis

This confusing and variable species has been a playground (or nightmare) for botanists as they try to unravel what belongs where. But in the horticultural sense, I am considering the pale primrose-yellow form of our native lent lily. This is a pretty daffodil that sits comfortably in the garden surroundings, unlike some modern overdone cultivars that may jar in a more naturalistic setting. Plant in loose drifts in meadows with primroses, cowslips and snakeshead fritillaries for best effect. Once established, bulbs will gradually clump up.

Height 25-35cm. **Spread** 10cm.
Origin Europe.
Conditions Any moist soil; full sun in meadow or deciduous woodland.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5b-10b.
Season Late winter to early spring.



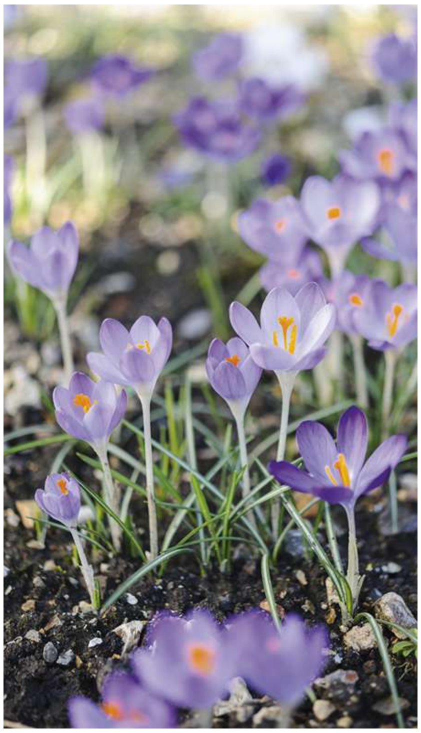


Helleborus x hybridus white-flowered

There are many hellebore hybrids to choose from – and I have quite a few of them in the woodland garden at Malverleys – but my default is the white-flowered form with a green eye. Unlike the darker forms, it shows up well, particularly in shady woodland conditions. It has vigour and, if kept isolated from other colours, will self-sow true from seed. In the winter when the ground is too hard or too wet to work, cut out the tatty old leaves and feed with leaf mould so the flowers are displayed at their best.

Height 30-40cm. **Spread** 40cm.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Good loamy soil, likes alkaline soils; some shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.
Season Late winter to early spring.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.



Crocus tommasinianus 'Whitewell Purple'

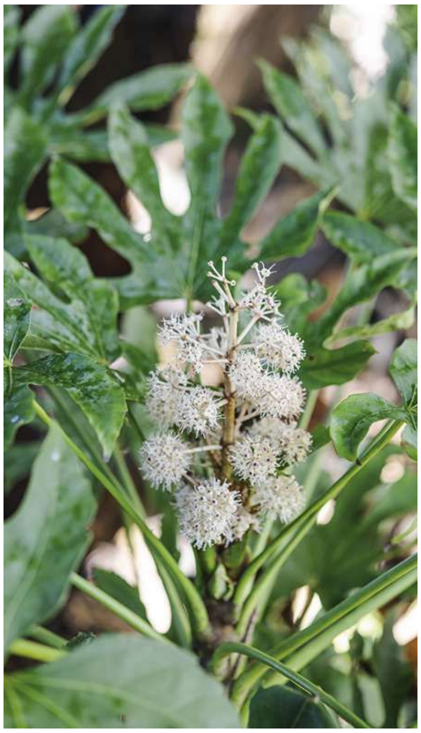
There's often a dearth of colour in the garden in February, which makes these naturalising crocuses all the more special. They will seed through turf to such a degree as to make thick carpets of gaping flowers whenever the sunshine calls. The flowers expand from silvery quills in early February, and will continue well into March. They prefer sunny, open ground but will make do with light, deciduous shade. Use a bulb planter to remove cores of soil and then plant the corms 5cm deep.

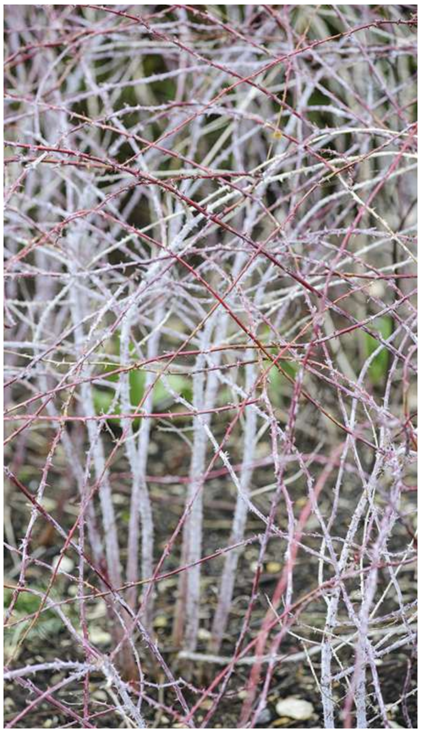
Height 10cm. **Spread** 3cm.
Origin Hungary, Bosnia, Montenegro, northwest Bulgaria.
Conditions Any soil; sun or part shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.
Season Late winter to early spring.

Fatsia polycarpa

This handsome *Fatsia* was introduced around ten years ago and I think it might be here to stay. Often new introductions don't cut it in the garden, and when I planted it under a mature Douglas fir I was sceptical. But despite the competition for water and light, it is making a wonderful specimen in a difficult position. It is akin to *F. japonica* but the large, palmately lobed leaves are matte textured and have a more jagged outline. It carries an exotic air and contrasts well with many other plants so extraordinary are the dramatic evergreen leaves.

Height 3m. **Spread** 3m.
Origin Taiwan.
Conditions Best in some shade and good soil – protect from wintery, easterly winds.
Hardiness RHS H3, USDA 8a-9a.
Season Year round.





Rubus cockburnianus 'Goldenvale'

This cultivar features attractive foliage, vivid stem colour and is less vigorous than the straight species. The new growth will give the whitest stems, so I cut all canes flush with the ground in spring and plant annual poppies in gaps between the crowns. The developing mounds of golden foliage contrast well with the red poppy flowers in May. In June when the poppies fade, the shoots continue to grow and make a golden thicket for summer. The white twigs will then return in winter to cast their ghostly tracery against the dark soil. AGM.

Height 1m. **Spread** 2m.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Any soil, not too dry in summer.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.
Season Year round.

Places to visit

Recommended places to see seasonal plants at their best

Winter can be a gloomy time for garden visits with everything seemingly held on pause for the spring ahead. One garden that can always provide inspiration is the **Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew,** where in the space of an afternoon you can travel from the tropics to frosty, winter woodlands. But for those in search of some colour at this time of year one of the best stops is the futuristic-looking Davies Alpine House. In February it is brimming with little treasures gathered from all over the world, including crocuses, tulips and Juno irises, that are grown to perfection and guaranteed to bedazzle and inspire. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3AE. Tel 020 8332 5655, kew.org

More traditional in its architectural style, but no less impressive is the alpine house

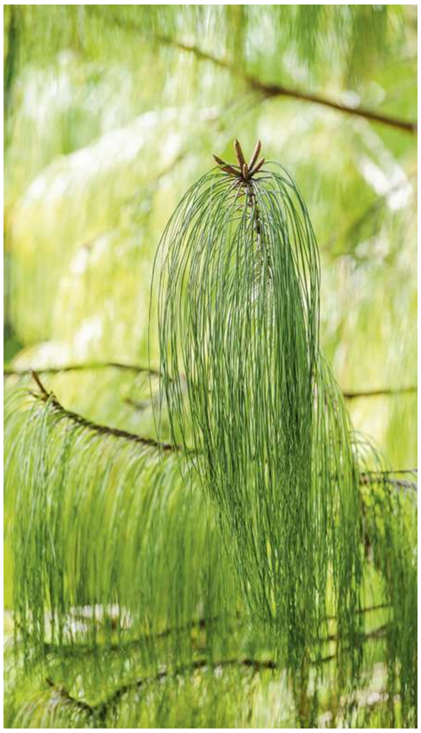
Alpine House at Wisley.

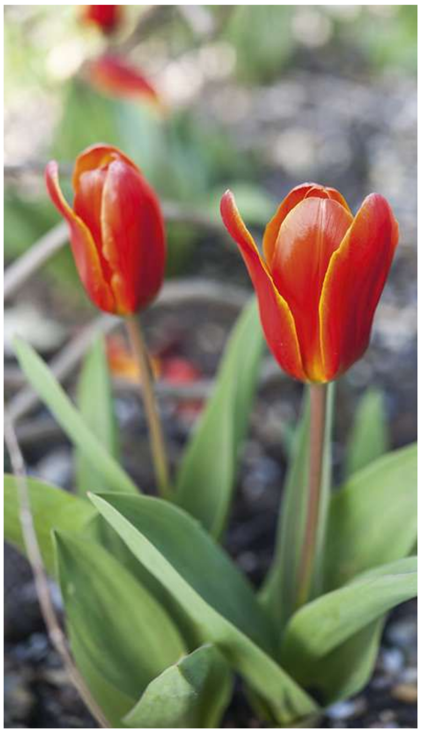
DEBBIE JOLLIFF / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES

Pinus patula

This elegant Mexican pine is a real head turner, and often draws comments from admiring visitors. The overall habit is a weeping effect and is more than a little reminiscent of a well-groomed Yorkshire terrier. It is a beautiful tree with slightly ascending branches draped in long, lax needles that shimmer in the wind. Plant to capture the morning or evening sun. It is a quick grower, and like many other fast-growing trees the root system lags behind – so be sure to stake. Note it may struggle in colder areas of the UK. AGM.

Height 15-20m. **Spread** 6-8m.
Origin Mexico.
Conditions Free-draining soil; sunny, sheltered site.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 7a-11.
Season Year round.





Tulipa 'Early Harvest'

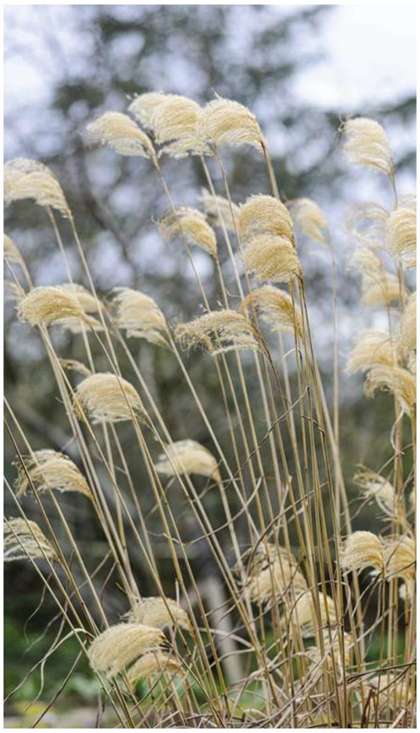
This is always our first tulip in flower and we await the jolt of the flaming blooms that herald the start of the tulip season at Malverleys. On a sunny day the flowers yawn wide open revealing reddish-yellow stars. In autumn we plant the bulbs between daylily crowns whose developing foliage marries well with the tulip flowers, and as they age, are consumed by the growing daylily leaves. Often the bulbs from previous plantings persist for a few years and flower three weeks before the newly planted bulbs. 'Early Harvest' is tough and can take all weathers – even snow. AGM.

Height 25cm.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Free-draining soil; sun.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.
Season Late winter to early spring.

Miscanthus nepalensis

In August, silky-golden tassels appear atop wand-like stems and gradually become fluffy as the seeds ripen and disperse. The empty seedheads continue, changing with the weather, fluffy in the sunshine and clinging in the rain. They are particularly good at netting snowflakes, arching over more steeply as the haul increases. Place at the front of the border, the fresh foliage is low and the long flower stems are see through. In the spring rake out old leaves and stems with your hands – it detests being cut back hard.

Height 1.5m. **Spread** 70cm.
Origin Himalaya and Burma.
Conditions Warm, free-draining site, avoid soils that sit wet in the winter.
Hardiness RHS H4.
Season Late summer to winter.



at **RHS Garden Wisley**, which holds a large collection of winter-flowering South African bulbs. RHS Garden Wisley, Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB. Tel 0845 260 9000, rhs.org.uk

At the opposite end of the gardening spectrum is **Bedgebury Pinetum** near Goudhurst in Kent. This 350-acre estate is managed by the Forestry Commission and home to the National Collection of conifers. It contains more than 12,000 trees and shrubs (including 1,800 different species) from five continents and is considered the world's largest and most complete collection. It's also the perfect destination for a bracing, afternoon stroll among stunning conifers and pines planted en masse. You can even take the dog. Bedgebury Pinetum, Park Lane, Goudhurst, Kent TN17 2SL. Tel 01580 879842, bedgeburypinetum.org.uk

Bedgebury Pinetum.

ANDREA JONES / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES

It is, of course, the season for snowdrops and aconites, and one of the nicest places to see these carpeting the ground with huge profusion is in the woodlands surrounding **Welford Park** near Newbury in Berkshire. Welford Park, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 8HU. Tel 01488 608691, welfordpark.co.uk

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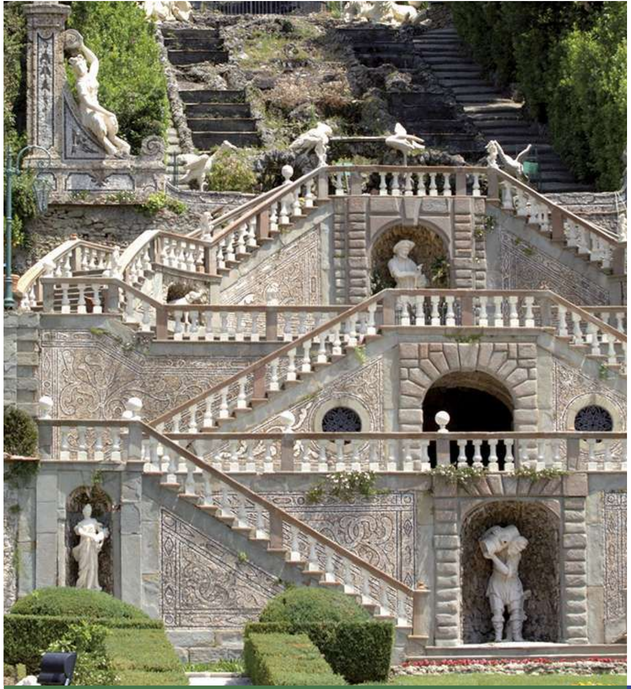

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IN THE GARDEN

As she prepares to build a new edible garden, Jojo takes steps to ensure that her allotment will live on long after she has relinquished it

WORDS **JOJO TULLOH** ILLUSTRATIONS **SARAH YOUNG**

One of the first actions I took as a gardener in 2017 was to start the formal process of giving up my allotment. I've had it for 16 years so it wasn't an easy decision. Our three daughters have grown up in parallel with the allotment, their palates informed by the flavour of its crops, which in turn have shaped our culinary family traditions. The march of the year is punctuated by the plot's produce: home-grown rhubarb as compote for our morning porridge; the excitement of the first tiny artichokes and asparagus swiftly followed by crisp, battered courgette flowers and new potatoes; the annual midsummer making of blackcurrant jelly that will see us through the winter in peanut butter and jelly sandwiches; the last home-grown tomato signalling the end of summer. The allotment has added colour to our family life, but it is time for a new direction.

With our children no longer tiny and happy to while away the hours hunting for worms, weekend visits have got harder to orchestrate. In the intervening years we have moved house and gained a much longer back garden. While I can't grow potatoes, the new space offers some exciting opportunities (and some challenges) as a potager (its fertility is enhanced by the hive of bees we keep on a flat roof). As a gardener, I've always been torn between my two plots – garden and allotment – with one inevitably suffering neglect while the other thrives. Being able to channel all my energy into just one site should pay dividends. The process of building a new edible garden will take time, so I have given myself one more growing season to squirrel away as many artichoke slips, soft fruit and herb cuttings as I can before handing back my plot in October.

I've started by looking around at other urban potagers for inspiration. On one 15 x 18m plot some friends have sliced a trapezoid-shaped, north-facing patch into a series of beds that will supply their family with between 60 and 70 different crops and still have space for a tree house and a stone circle with a table and chairs in the centre. The tree house, which doubles as a frame for climbing squash, also supports four troughs filled with strawberry plants. Pear and apple trees are espaliered along the back fence, with leeks and onions growing in front. In a shady corner a bountiful fig flourishes. The garden was originally under tons of builders' rubble with badly compacted soil, but over time it has been revitalised and now provides crops all year round. That this unlikely plot can provide such riches bolsters my resolve.

WHAT TO DO NOW

I have a pair of step-over apple trees at the allotment I want to transplant and now, while they are dormant, is the right time. Water well the day before, then dig gently around and under the plant, lifting out as much of the root ball as possible. You may need to cut some thicker roots with secateurs. Wrap the roots in damp sacking and ideally replant on the same day. Prune branches by a fifth to give the tree a better chance of re-establishing itself. The new hole should be large enough for the roots to spread out. Fork the sides and base of the hole, and add and compost or leaf mould. Fill in carefully, making sure there are no air pockets and that the tree is planted at the same depth as before. Stake for support and water well after planting and then during dry spells. Feed and keep free of weeds.

IN THE KITCHEN

Jojo beats the winter blues by adding a colourful and seasonal twist to salads with this month's crop of beetroot

Your salad bowl should reflect the changing seasons. Don't serve the same salad by default year round. Think of it as the best way to showcase ingredients as they come into season. February is one of the more challenging months for green vegetables, but if you expand your ideas of what constitutes a salad beyond some leaves in a bowl you should still have plenty of choice. Root vegetables, brassicas and bitter leaves enlivened by citrus dressings and the sharp and salty flavours of the store cupboard, such as capers and pickled walnuts, still offer plenty of variables. Hard-boiled eggs, macerated shallots, cheese or nuts make good additions, but don't be tempted to overdo it. Purity of effect is what to strive for. It's easy to overwhelm vegetable flavours with too much dressing or a hotch-potch of ingredients. When the composition of a dish is simple, more care must be taken in its preparation, so make sure knives are nice and sharp for thin slicing, ingredients are not overcooked, leaves are dried well and good vinegar and oil are used. Think about colour and texture as well as flavour when considering how your salad works as a contrast with the rest of the menu. □

RECIPES

Beetroot is an invaluable and versatile winter vegetable. In these three salads it's eaten raw and cooked. When cooking beetroots for soup I always boil them (after scrupulously scrubbing them), adding a splash of vinegar to the water, and saving the deep-red water as stock. For salads, roasting gives a sweeter, deeper flavour. Take six to eight beets, and cut the leaves leaving a short stub so the roots don't bleed. Scrub and place in a roasting dish with a splash of water. Cover securely with foil and roast at 200ºC for around 45 min or until soft when pierced with a knife. When cool peel off the skins.

Walnut, chicory, blue cheese and beetroot

Take around eight walnuts and remove the kernels (around 50g shelled nuts). Toast the nuts in a dry frying pan until they begin to smell nutty. Remove and cool. Take a head of castelfranco or other loose-leafed chicory, separate into leaves, wash and spin dry. Arrange the leaves in a salad bowl with around 450g of roasted beetroots cut into quarters (or eighths if large). Make a simple vinaigrette of 3tbsp olive oil and 1tbsp cider or wine vinegar, and season. Just before serving, crumble over around 50g of blue cheese (it works well without too) and add the walnuts, then dress, toss and serve.

You can also serve beetroots with endive and two pared, sliced oranges in a vinaigrette dressing with the added zest of one orange and its juice. Peel and slice the orange and set aside. Wash and crisp some endive in cold water. Drain and dry well before mixing with the beetroots and the orange and toss in the dressing.

Crisp beetroot, carrot, apple and chickpea salad

If you have a julienne attachment on a mandolin or food processor, you can make a variety of vibrant root vegetable salads very easily. This one would go well with a hefty chicken sandwich for a good gardener's lunch. Take one beetroot (raw and peeled), two carrots (peeled), one green apple, one small red onion (peeled) and one cucumber and use the julienne attachment or a knife to cut them all into matchsticks. Chop a handful of flat-leaved parsley and add half a tin of drained chickpeas. Dress with vinaigrette (as above) toss and serve.

Beetroot with dandelion greens

Roast and peel around eight medium beetroot. Dress the beets in vinaigrette (a little saltier than usual) and allow the beetroot to macerate for an hour. Take a handful of washed and dried dandelion greens (or use rocket or lamb's lettuce) and just before serving toss with the beetroots. This dish is good before an omelette as part of a simple supper.

Carrot, celeriac and rocket salad

Root vegetables can be julienned, then dressed with lemon juice and chilli and left to macerate before being mixed with bitter or pepper leaves just before serving. Take three carrots, peel, julienne and massage with the juice of half a lemon and a sprinkle of chilli flakes and salt. Do the same with half a celeriac (keep the vegetables separate at this stage). After half an hour, toss the two root vegetables together with a bunch of washed and dried rocket or lamb's lettuce (about 200g). Dress with olive oil and serve. You can substitute fennel or celery for carrot or celeriac.

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by Rosemary Alexander

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A must-have read for passionate gardeners, *Gardens Illustrated* magazine provides a unique insight into the world's most beautiful gardens, irresistible plants and clever design.

designer garden

In brief
Name The Old Rectory.
What Designer Mary Keen's own garden with strong structure and colourful planting.
Where Gloucestershire.
Size One and three quarter acres.
Soil 'Cotswold Brash' – free draining limestone.
Climate 150m above sea level, so colder than much of southwest England, but the frost does drain away.
Hardiness rating USDA 8.

Mary Keen's Cotswold garden features several design elements inspired by the many gardens she has visited, such as box balls and an opening cut into a yew hedge

Seasonal style

In the first of four seasonal visits to the Cotswold garden of writer and designer Mary Keen, we look at how structure plays a leading role in winter

WORDS MARY KEEN PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM

In 1992 we moved to the Cotswolds, to a prim and proper rectory set in a stony garden full of conifers. Cars parked between the Virginia creeper-covered façade and the only lawn. Such unpromising ingredients dismayed me: the soil was pitiful and the site was steep. What became our kitchen garden at the top, was 15 metres higher than the lowest point, the dell, next to the lane. Once we had banished the cars to a small yard near the barn and cleared the shrubs at the end of the lawn, we owned a view of open fields with cattle grazing and we could sit on a sunny gravel terrace under the south-facing windows. I never want to see cars from the house if it can be avoided, even if it means carrying bags in the rain. The country around here is beautiful and shutting it out would be madness. Unless the view is in the eye of prevailing winds, I would always want a sight of surrounding landscape. To create another glimpse of a small wood, a giant thuja hedge was replaced with yew. There was already a large existing lump of yew near the building with a holly tree inside it as high as two thirds of the house. We cut that back hard over two springs, to keep the height below the first-floor windows. This makes a protected area for a table and six chairs and the gravel is home to many self-seeding plants, but the porch has an apron of paving stones for pots, which avoids stones being brought into the house.

I love winter, even though it means at least five months when trees are leafless and most flowers go underground, so I add things to provide interest and colour on chilly everyday routes, with scented *Sarcococca* by the backdoor door to welcome me home.

Topiary is a Cotswold feature and there is nothing like it for furnishing a garden all through the year. Vegetable sculpture is evergreen and can give height and drama to empty beds. There are box balls outside the front door (*Buxus sempervirens* 'Rotundifolia' is fast growing if you want large specimens). The keyhole opening in the huge yew arch leads to a view of the sunken summer garden where there are four sentinels of fastigiate *Buxus sempervirens* 'Graham Blandy' around a copper planter. The inspiration for this was the cottage garden at Sissinghurst, but there the upright evergreens are Irish yews, not box. Things seen in other gardens often influence my designs and at home there is a curling hedge of box around the orchard, which I remembered noticing round an orchard at Hinton Ampner in Hampshire, but all our hedges are cut with rounded tops, not smart, straight ones, which are more suitable for grander houses than rectories. The four box balls in the kitchen garden where the paths meet were inspired by a similar effect at Heale House in Wiltshire, but ours, after a bout of box disease, are now *Lonicera nitida*.

READER EVENT
Don't miss Mary Keen's talk on why we should all stop worrying about creating the perfect garden and learn to embrace the wild at the *Gardens Illustrated* Festival, 25-26 March 2017. See page 9 or go to **gardensfestival.com** for details and how to book tickets.

Turn over for Mary's tips on structure and plants for winter ▷

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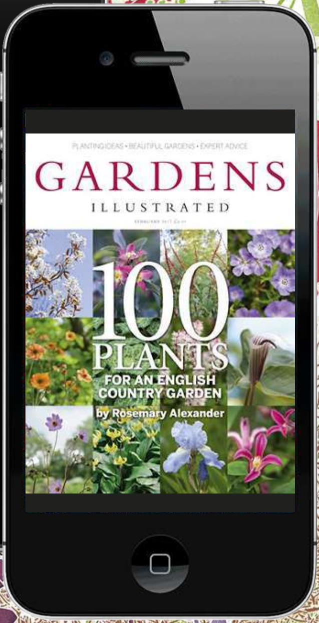

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Russell Watkins

Careful planning throughout the year ensures that Russell's charge of the Winter Walk at RHS Harlow Carr in Yorkshire comes to life when most other gardens are at their quietest

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest gardening memory from the age of about four I had my own little plot in my nan's garden. This is where she taught me to grow typical old-fashioned plants, such as wallflowers and candytuft.

Favourite garden I was taken recently to Ray Wood, a secluded gem of a woodland garden within the grounds of Castle Howard, North Yorkshire. The plant choices and combinations are amazing.

Three worthwhile tips for every gardener Be sure to consider presentation, experimentation and at times ruthlessness.

Most valuable training My time spent at Birmingham Botanical Gardens as an apprentice and also at Pershore College. Both of these were very practical experiences.

Favourite planting style I'm currently really into woodland gardens and planting styles, using different textures and shades of greens to create rich yet understated combinations.

What heartens you about our attitudes to horticulture today? Being a mentor for our apprentices and for one of the schools in our Green Plan-it Challenge. I'm excited that we are inspiring young people to see horticulture as the exciting and rewarding career that it is.

Favourite gardening books I'm very fond of *A Gardener's Guide To Snowdrops* by Freda Cox. Being responsible for the Winter Walk at Harlow Carr I have become quite interested in *Galanthus*. This book has 80 pages of illustrations and really easy-to-follow descriptions that makes identifying them so much easier.

Has your obsession with plants ever led to any embarrassing moments? When I was about 12, my biology teacher had a really great collection of succulents in her lab. I admired an aloe, and I think she was so excited that someone had taken an interest in a plant that she made this big scene about giving me a side shoot of it. The entire class was staring at me like I was the class freak! Well Mrs John, if you're reading this I still have it 20-odd years later. □

Contact russellwatkins@rhs.org.uk

- RHS Harlow Carr's Winter Walk has just celebrated its tenth year and Russell has led on its development for the past eight. Last autumn some 5,000 *Iris reticulata* bulbs were planted to create a spectacular display from mid-February. For full details of the Winter Walk and opening times go to rhs.org.uk/gardens/harlowcarr

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ROSEMARY ALEXANDER'S 100 great plants for an English country garden

WORDS **ROSEMARY ALEXANDER**

The plants I have chosen are all – with just three covetous exceptions – ones I've grown at home at some point, so they're plants I've lived with. None are difficult or needful of special care but I do have thin sandy soil. We feed and improve the soil regularly and use organic methods. Generally, they are plants that have a long season of interest, good shape and texture, and give me much pleasure.

MARTIN POPE

Trees

1 *ACACIA BAILEYANA* 'PURPUREA'

Tender yet fast-growing tree, remarkable for its purple, cut-leaf, year-round foliage. When mature, produces racemes of bright-yellow flowers in early spring. Needs a warm, sunny position, sheltered from wind. AGM*. **Height (H)** 3-10m. **Spread (S)** 2-4m. **Conditions (C)** Well-drained soil; full sun. **Season of interest (SI)** Flowers early spring. **Hardiness ratings (HR)** RHS H2, USDA 7a-11.

2 *ACER CAMPESTRE*

Small, compact, native tree with spectacular autumn foliage colour and winter bark. Fairly slow growing and round topped. Useful as a single specimen or for mass planting. AGM. **H** 4-5m. **S** 4-5m. **C** Most soils. **SI** Autumn foliage. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

3 *ACER GRISEUM*

Good orange-brown autumn foliage, but its real beauty is the peeling orange-brown bark seen when leafless for winter. Takes time to establish but well worth waiting for. AGM. **H** 3-5m. **S** 1.2-2m. **C** Most soils but can be chlorotic in extreme alkaline conditions. **SI** Winter bark. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.

4 *AMELANCHIER LAMARCKII*

Performs well with racemes of white flowers in late spring. Light-green, ovate foliage, which colours brilliant orange-red in autumn. Really earns its keep. AGM. **H** 5-7m. **S** 3-5m. **C** Tolerates alkalinity and acidity. **SI** Flowers in spring. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.

5 *CORNUS MAS*

Really spectacular in early spring when other trees are still dormant. A long-lived, shapely, round-headed tree for winter interest, with small, yellow-tufted flowers produced profusely on naked stems from late winter to early spring. Good yellow autumn foliage. **H** 5-10m. **S** 2-4m. **C** Any soil; full sun to light shade. **SI** Late winter to early spring. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

6 *CORNUS* 'EDDIE'S WHITE WONDER'

Superb, compact, small tree covered with spectacular, large, white flower heads in spring. Fairly lax branches and slightly drooping habit. Show stopper when in flower. AGM. **H** 3-5m. **S** 2-3m. **C** Most soils, avoid alkaline or waterlogged. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.

7 *ELAEAGNUS* 'QUICKSILVER'

Silvery, narrow leaves and contrasting tiny, scented pale-yellow flowers. Place where the scent can drift over a terrace or seating area. Tends to need a few untidy branches removed each spring to maintain its shape. **H** 5 -10m. **S** 3-5m. **C** Most soil, except shallow chalk; full sun. Tends to sucker. **SI** Early summer. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

8 *EUONYMUS ALATUS*

A specimen small tree or shrub and one of the finest for autumn colour. Fast growing with curious winged bark, plus bright-red hanging fruits or berries in autumn. **H** 3-5m. **S** 2-4m. **C** Prefers alkaline soil but tolerates all; sun or light shade. **SI** Autumn berry colour. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.

9 *MALUS TRANSITORIA*

Abundant pale-pink flowers maturing to white. This crab apple may be scarce to find but worth growing on to form a small tree. AGM. **H** 8m. **S** 8m. **C** Most soil conditions. Dislikes waterlogging. **SI** Spring flowers and autumn berries. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

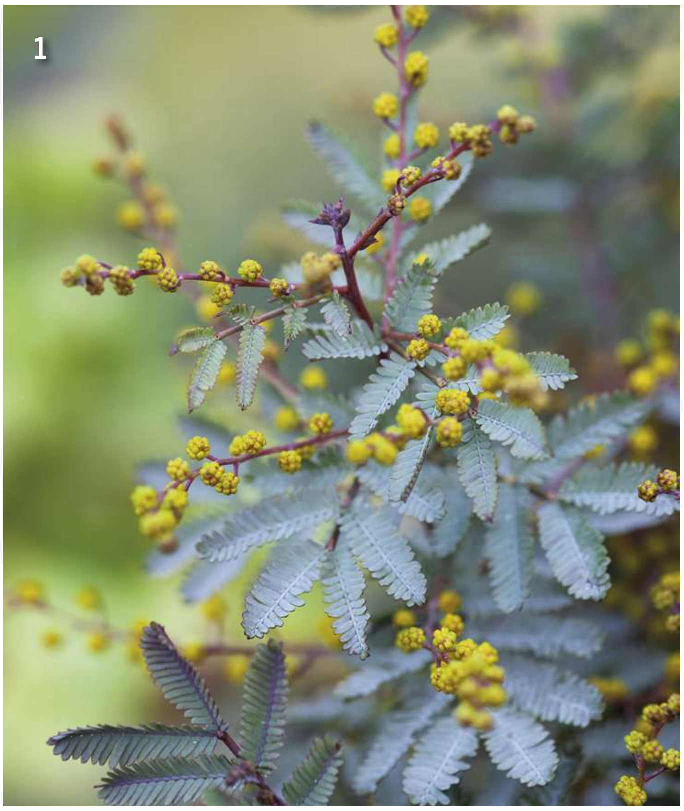
Shrubs

10 *CHOISYA* X *DEWITTEANA* WHITE DAZZLER (= 'LONDAZ')

An adaptable plant, I have clipped to a rounded shape, alternatively it can be used as a flowering hedge or in a container. AGM. **H** 1m. **S** 1.5m. **C** Most soils, although chlorotic in severe alkaline conditions. **SI** Flowers in early summer with secondary later flushes. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 8a-10a.

11 *CORNUS SANGUINEA* 'MIDWINTER FIRE'

Invaluable for winter stem colour, adaptable and useful for difficult sites. Stems need to be severely reduced or cut to the ground in



1 JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS; 3, 7 & 9 JASON INGRAM; 4 C-IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

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*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.

spring to produce new long shoot extensions, which will colour up in winter when leafless. AGM. **H** 2-3m. **S** 2.5m. **C** Tolerates extreme waterlogging. **SI** Autumnal leaf colour and winter stem colour. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.

12 *CORYLOPSIS PAUCIFLORA*

Racemes of cowslip-scented, primrose-yellow flowers appear in profusion in mid spring. Little pruning required when mature, except to remove overcrowded stems. Slow to establish but worth the wait. AGM. **H** 2m. **S** 2m. **C** Neutral-to-acid soil, dislikes alkalinity. **SI** Spring. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.

13 *COTINUS COGGYGRIA*

Fawn-coloured, inflorescence-like plumes in June and July turn smoky grey by late summer. Leaves give rich autumn tints. Fast growing, and quite tall and lax, but can be cut to ground level each spring, which produces large foliage at the expense of flowers. AGM. **H** 1.5-3m. **S** 1.8-3m. **C** Prefers rich, deep soil but tolerates all. **SI** Summer and autumn for flowers and foliage. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.

14 *DAPHNE BHOLUA* 'JACQUELINE POSTILL'

Upright shrub with sweetly scented flowers borne in mid winter. These are red-mauve in bud, opening to white. Best left unpruned. Mulch to keep the roots cool. Highly toxic. AGM. **H** 4m. **S** 1.5m. **C** Well-drained but moist soil; sun or part shade. **SI** Late winter. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 7a-10b.

> *Trees provide a vertical accent, linking sky with the ground below – and their bark can be as important as their leaves.*

15 *HAMAMELIS* X *INTERMEDIA* 'VESNA'

Spreading deciduous shrub grown for its large clusters of highly scented, spidery flowers, which appear on the bare branches in winter. Usually in flower late December until the leaves appear in March. AGM. **H** 4m. **S** 3m. **C** Acid-to-neutral, moist but well-drained soil; full sun or part shade. **SI** Winter, early spring. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

16 *HYDRANGEA PANICULATA* 'LIMELIGHT

Low-branched, spreading large shrub producing long-lasting, large, lime-greenish, conical flowers in late summer through to autumn. Deciduous and fast growing, prefers light shade but deep shade spoils its shape. AGM. **H** 2m. **S** 2m. **C** Prefers rich, deep soil but tolerates most. **SI** Late summer to autumn. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

17 *HYDRANGEA QUERCIFOLIA*

Oak leaf hydrangea with a rounded outline and lobed leaves that turn red to burgundy in early winter. Magnificent white flowers are formed on previous year's growth, so prune to shape after flowering. **H** 1m. **S** 1.2m. **C** Most soils; full sun to deep shade. **SI** Summer and autumn. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 5a-10b.

18 *MAHONIA* X *MEDIA* 'CHARITY'

This handsome plant was one of my first gardening acquaintances and I always look forward to its upright, deep-yellow racemes appearing in late autumn. Tall, mature plants can be severely reduced in size and will regrow. **H** 1.5m. **S** 1m. **C** Wide range of soils but avoid very alkaline. **SI** Late autumn to early winter. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 7a-9b.

19 *SARCOCOCCA HOOKERIANA* VAR. *DIGYNA*

Fast-growing, medium-sized evergreen shrub producing small, off-white, sweetly scented flowers in late winter. Place near a door where the winter scent can be enjoyed. Good in containers and for a low hedge. **H** 75cm. **S** 75cm. **C** Most soils unless poor and unfed. **SI** Midwinter. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 6a-10b.

20 *TROCHODENDRON ARALIOIDES*

Gradually develops a pyramid outline with tiered branches and dark-green foliage. Known as the wheel tree for its spoke-like arrangement of bright-green flowers. **H** 3m. **S** 2m. **C** Well-drained, acid soil; shade, out of wind. **SI** All year. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 6a-8b. ▷

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17 SHAPENCOLOUR / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 12 & 14 JASON INGRAM; 15 MARTIN HUGHES-JONES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 11 SHARON PEARSON

▷ Architectural shrubs

21 *ERIOBOTRYA JAPONICA*
Firm, corrugated, dark-green leaves, covered on the lower surface with greyish-brown indumentum. Cinnamon-brown bark on older plants. Edible, yellow to orange loquat fruits in midsummer. Good in containers. AGM. **H** 4-7m. **S** 4-7m. **C** Tolerates most well-drained soils. **SI** All year. **HR** RHS H3, USDA 7a-10b.

22 *HEBE VERNICOSA*
Produces slender racemes of white flowers in late spring. After flowering, can be clipped to a rounded shape and used instead of box, although it's not so tight. AGM. **H** 75cm. **S** 75cm. **C** Well-drained soil; not too dry. **SI** All year. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 7b-9b.

23 *ILEX AQUIFOLIUM* 'HASCOMBENSIS'
Shiny, dark-green convex foliage, it can be grown in pots or in borders and clipped to shape. A male plant, it does not produce berries. **H** 2-3m. **S** 1.5-2m. **C** Any soil, preferably acid and not permanently wet. **SI** All year. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.

24 *JUNIPERUS SCOPULORUM* 'SKYROCKET'
A narrow, columnar juniper, with needle-like, bluish-green, prickly foliage, this small tree is invaluable for providing a strong upright accent or focal point. **H** 5m. **S** 60cm. **C** Any soil except wet; full sun needed for maximum growth. **SI** All year. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

25 *PHILLYREA ANGUSTIFOLIA*
A handsome evergreen shrub, with narrow, dark-green leaves and fragrant, creamy-yellow flowers in axillary clusters in May and June. Can be cloud pruned. Excellent seaside plant. **H** 2m. **S** 1.2-2m. **C** All types of soil except extreme alkaline or wet. **SI** All year. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 7a-9b.

26 *TAXUS BACCATA* 'FASTIGIATA'
Columnar with strongly vertical branches providing an invaluable structural or focal point. Stems can be clipped or tied in to retain their upright shape. AGM. **H** 5-10m. **S** 2m. **C** Most soils, moist or dry and sun or shade. Need good drainage. **SI** All year. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.

Climbers

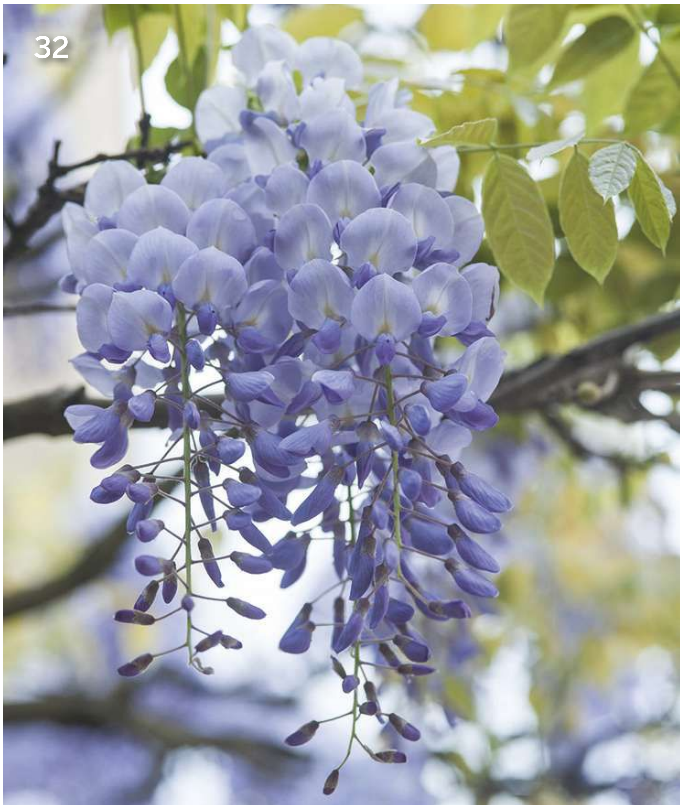
27 *CLEMATIS* 'FRANCIS RIVIS'
Long, elegant flowers in the deepest shade of blueish-purple are followed by attractive silky seedheads. Grows best in poorer soils and allowed to scramble over an arch or through a larger shrub. AGM. **H** 2-3m. **S** 3-4m. **C** Fine roots so never plant deeply. Avoid waterlogging. **SI** Mid spring-early summer. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 4b-9a.

28 *CLEMATIS* 'PRINCESS DIANA'
Long flowering, preferring deep, moist soil in a sunny position. Tends to die off to ground level in winter, but recovers in spring. AGM. **H** 3m. **S** 5m. **C** Sun, good soil and very resistant to mildew. **SI** Midsummer to autumn. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.

29 *CLEMATIS VITICELLA* 'FLORE PLENO'
A slender climber or scrambler with velvety, deep-purple flowers, borne on slim stalks in summer and early autumn. **H** 3m. **S** 3-4m. **C** Most soils but needs adequate moisture to do well so not dry. **SI** Summer into autumn. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

30 *LONICERA ETRUSCA* 'MICHAEL ROSSE'
Deciduous with highly fragrant, pale-yellow flowers that deepen with age. Foliage has a greyish bloom. Prefers being a large shrub rather than a climber. **H** 2m. **S** 2m. **C** Most soils, but not too dry. **SI** Early summer flowering. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 7a-10b.

31 *TRACHELOSPERMUM ASIATICUM*
Unsurpassed as a scented, evergreen climber. Elegant twining foliage is starred with creamy white, richly scented flowers all summer. Will succeed in all but the coldest localities. Needs to be kept tidy by tight clipping after flowering. AGM. **H** 8m. **S** 3m. **C** Well-drained, fertile soil; full sun or part shade. **SI** Mid to late summer. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 9a-11. ▷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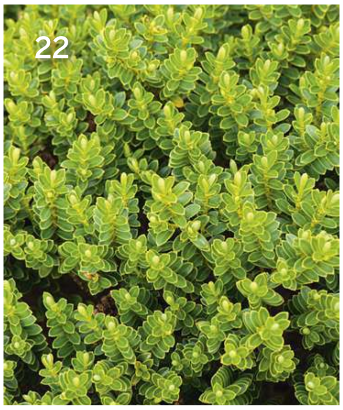
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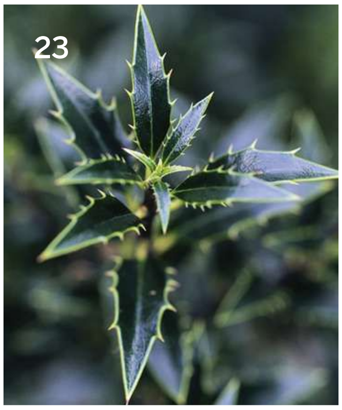
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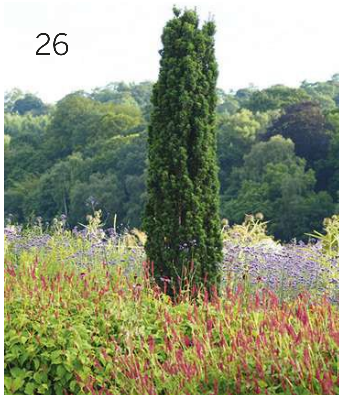
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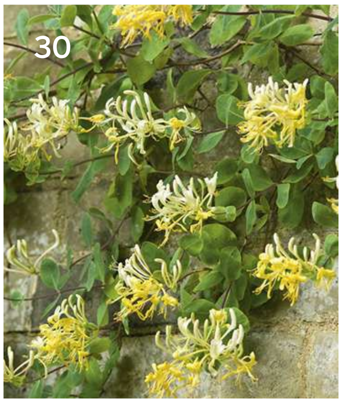
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32 FIONA RICE / GAP PHOTOS; 22 CAROLE DRAKE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 23 TORIE CHUGG / GAP PHOTOS. 26 JO WHITWORTH / GAP PHOTOS; DESIGN TOM STUART-SMITH; 30 HOWARD RICE / GAP PHOTOS

Consider how climbers climb. Will they twine or scramble through other plants, are they plants that use adhesive pads, such as ivy, or will they need some support?

29 CAROLE DRAKE / GAP PHOTOS; GARDEN WOLLERTON OLD HALL, SHROPSHIRE. OWNERS/DESIGNERS LESLEY AND JOHN JENKINS

▷ **32 *WISTERIA SINENSIS***
One of the wonders of May when in full flower with scented racemes of light mauve flowers. If overfed it will produce leaves at the expense of flowers. Needs hard pruning in late winter. AGM. **H** 10m plus **S** 3-6m. **C** Good loam; full sun. **SI** May to June. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

Roses

33 *ROSA* 'PAUL'S HIMALAYAN MUSK'
Useful rambler that is profuse when flowering in July. The scented, pinkish-lavender flowers are produced in drooping clusters. Best when allowed to scramble through a mature tree. Needs quite severe annual pruning in early spring. AGM. **H** 6m. **S** 3.5m. **C** Most soils including dry. **SI** Early summer. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.

34 *ROSA* 'PERLE D'OR'
Clusters of small, shapely, slightly scented, fully double, buff-peach flowers against rich-green foliage on a vigorous, slender plant. Repeat flowering and good for picking. Even does well on my thin, sandy soil. AGM. **H** 1.2m. **S** 60cm. **C** Most soils; sun. **SI** Early summer onwards. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.

35 *ROSA* 'ROSERAIE DE L'HAY'
A rugosa rose producing loose crimson-purple blooms on almost-flat flowers. Highly scented and flowers develop into colourful hips in autumn if not deadheaded. Grows into a large shapely shrub. AGM. **H** 1.8m. **S** 15m. **C** Most soils, not dry; tolerates shade. **SI** June to autumn. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.

36 *ROSA* DARCEY BUSSELL (= 'AUSDECORUM')
One of the most floriferous and healthiest of roses with deep crimson-red flowers, tinged to mauve just before petals drop. Continuous flowering with pleasant fragrance and short, bushy growth. Appreciates being well fed, on thinner, well-drained soils. AGM. **H** 1m. **S** 60cm. **C** Wide range but needs good soil preparation. **SI** Summer and continuous flowering. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 6b-10a.

37 *ROSA* EDEN ROSE '88 (= 'MEIVIOLIN')
Modern climber with fully double flowers of creamy pinkish-white. Dark-green foliage, vigorous and repeat flowering through to November. Flowers rather heavy and therefore tend to droop. Needs regular deadheading. **H** 2.4m. **S** 1.8m. **C** Most including poorer dry soils. **SI** June through to late autumn. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.

38 *ROSA* GERTRUDE JEKYLL (= 'AUSBORD')
Tall and vigorous, suitable for middle or back of border. Strongly fragrant, with perfect little scrolled buds expanding into quite large pink rosettes that last a long time and are seen against good green foliage. Healthy and reliable, can also be grown as a short climber. AGM. **H** 1.2m. **S** 1m. **C** Most soils but objects to thin sand. **SI** All summer as continuous flowering. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 5a-10a.

39 *ROSA GLAUCA*
Clusters of inconspicuous small flowers of soft mauve-pink followed by oval reddish-purple hips in autumn seen against glaucous purple stems and foliage. No pruning needed except to occasionally remove some older stems. AGM. **H** 1.8m. **S** 1.5m. **C** Tolerant of poorer soils and slight shade. **SI** All-year stem interest. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 2a-9b.

Perennials

40 *AGAPANTHUS* 'MIDNIGHT BLUE'
Bell-shaped, dark-blue flowers on strong, upright stems during late summer and early autumn. The narrow, strap-like, greyish green leaves are deciduous. Especially useful in pots, where they like to be congested. **H** 45cm. **S** 30cm. **C** Moist, well-drained, fertile soil; full sun. **SI** Late summer to autumn. **HR** RHS H3, USDA 7a-9b.

41 *ACTAEA SIMPLEX* (ATROPURPUREA GROUP) 'BRUNETTE'
Small, creamy-white, scented flowers in fluffy spires, set off against cut-leaved, bronze-hued

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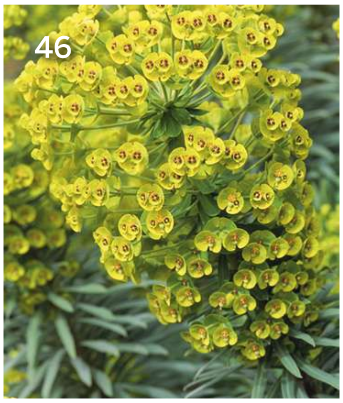
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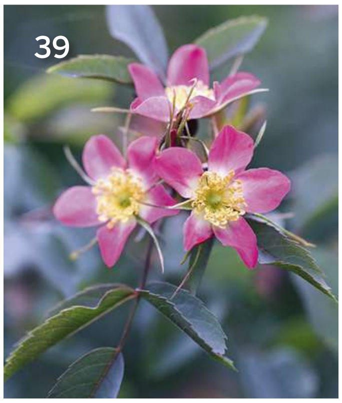
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45 RACHEL WARNE; 43 JO WHITWORTH / GETTY; 33 GAP PHOTOS; 46 JO WHITWORTH / GAP PHOTOS; 39 DIANNA JAZWINSKI / GAP PHOTOS

foliage. Most effective when used among silver colours. Fast growing and easy. AGM. **H** 1m. **S** 1m. **C** Moist soil, enriched with leaf mould; part shade. **SI** Late summer and autumn. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

42 *ALCHEMILLA MOLLIS*
One of the easiest plants to grow and bulks up quickly, with acid-yellow flowers on floppy stems in June and July. Cut back the downy, rounded foliage and flower stems hard after flowering. Water well and it will regrow and occasionally re-flower. Tends to spread. AGM. **H** 50cm. **S** 50cm. **C** Full sun or dry shade. **SI** Early summer with second flowering in autumn. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

43 *ANEMONE* X *HYBRIDA* 'HONORINE JOBERT'
One of the autumn stalwarts. It never needs staking, is healthy, vigorous and flowers for up to three months. White, saucer-shaped flowers with golden stamens rise up from the ground, covering clumps of mid-green foliage. Once established, watch out for invasive tendencies. AGM. **H** 1.2m. **S** 1.2m. **C** Fertile, humus-rich soil; sun or dappled shade. **SI** Late summer to autumn. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

44 *ASTRANTIA MAXIMA*
Soft-pink, pincushion-like flowers with matching spiky bracts and deeply cut leaves. Flowers for three months, and if cut back hard after first flowering, will flower again in early autumn. AGM. **H** 90cm. **S** 45cm. **C** Moist soil, full sun or part shade. **SI** Summer to autumn. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.

> *When deciding how to arrange perennials in a border, consider how seasonal changes will affect their height and spread.*

45 *ERYNGIUM GIGANTEUM*
Silvery, cone-like flowers with a broad ruff of grey prickly bracts. Flowers midsummer and holds spent flower heads well into the autumn when it seeds around. Copes with dry conditions such as gravel. **H** 90cm. **S** 30cm. **C** Well-drained, dry soil. **SI** Midsummer. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 6a-9b.

46 *EUPHORBIA CHARACIAS* SUBSP. *WULFENII* 'JOHN TOMLINSON'
One of the best euphorbias, with grey-green, evergreen leaves and large, rounded heads of bell-shaped, bright-yellow flower bracts in late spring or early summer. Difficult to root from cuttings. AGM. **H** 1.2m. **S** 1.2m. **C** Well-drained soil; sun. **SI** All year. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 7a-10b.

47 *EUPHORBIA MELLIFERA*
Large, rounded, shrub-like plant with smooth, green stems topped with whorls of long, narrow, acid-green leaves. By late spring these carry curious, knobbly, brown flowers with a honey-like scent. AGM. **H** 2m. **S** 2.5m. **C** Well-drained soil against a warm wall. **SI** Flowers May to June. **HR** RHS H2, USDA 9a-11.

48 *GERANIUM* ROZANNE (= 'GERWAT')
Blue-flowering geraniums abound but this one flowers from June until autumn. Purple-veined, cup-shaped, blue flowers with white centres over deeply divided foliage. AGM. **H** 60cm. **S** 40cm. **C** Any well-drained soil; sun or part shade. **SI** Summer into autumn. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

49 *GEUM* 'TOTALLY TANGERINE'
Long-lasting sprays of sterile, apricot-orange flowers. No need to deadhead as they are trying to reproduce so will continue to flower. Fashionable colour and effective in a hot border colour scheme. **H** 90cm. **S** 50cm. **C** Any well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** Flowering all summer. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 5a-7b.

50 *HELLEBORUS* X *ERICSMITHII* 'BOB'S BEST'
Outstanding, pink-flushed, white flowers set off by deep-green pewter-flushed foliage. Worthy of close inspection so place carefully, perhaps near a path in shade. Long flowering. **H** 40cm. **S** 40cm. **C** Fertile, moist, humus-rich soil with good drainage. **SI** Early spring. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 7a-10b. ▷

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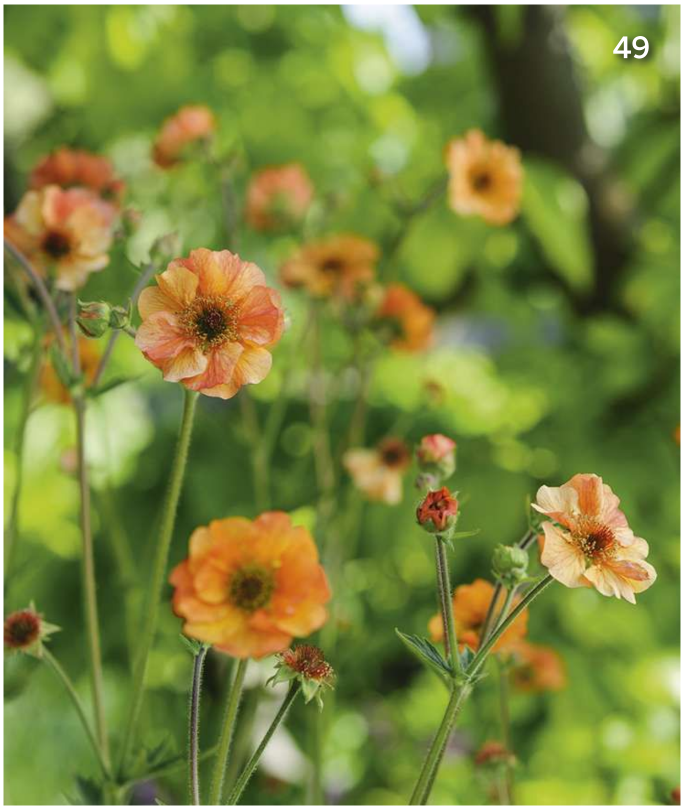
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40 MARK BOLTON / GAP PHOTOS; 49 & 50 JASON INGRAM; 41 REX MAY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 48 MARK BOLTON / GAP PHOTOS

▷ 51 *HEUCHERA* 'OBSIDIAN'

Mounds of lobed, maroon-purple leaves that darken with age. Effective when repeated at a low level through a border. **H** 60cm. **S** 40cm. **C** Moisture-retentive, well-drained, neutral-to-alkaline soil; full sun or dappled shade. **SI** Midsummer to autumn. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.

52 *HOSTA* 'SUM AND SUBSTANCE'

A golden giant with deeply veined, heart-shaped, glossy leaves that pucker with age. Demands attention and copes with full sun. AGM. **H** 75cm. **S** 1.2m. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun or part shade. **SI** Midsummer to autumn. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-10b.

53 *HOSTA* 'HALCYON'

Its heart-shaped leaves are so coated with a fine wax film that they appear blue. Fine heads of lilac-blue flowers appear on purplish stems in late summer. AGM. **H** 30cm. **S** 70cm. **C** Moisture-retentive, well-drained soil; part shade. **SI** Spring to autumn. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-10b.

54 *IRIS* 'JANE PHILLIPS'

Popular bearded iris with fragrant, ruffled, sky-blue flowers and white beard. The rhizomes need to sit on the soil surface so do not mulch. AGM. **H** 1.2m. **S** 50cm. **C** Well-drained, neutral-to-alkaline soil; full sun. **SI** May to June. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

> *Try using the Chelsea chop – where you cut perennials back by a third to a half in late May – as an alternative to staking.*

55 *IRIS LAZICA*

An evergreen iris with lavender-blue veined flowers, marked white and yellow. Good at the base of a north-facing wall among hellebores and snowdrops. Easy and appears in February just when spirits need lifting. AGM. **H** 50cm. **S** 50cm. **C** Moist soil; shade. **SI** Early spring. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 8a-10b.

56 *KIRENGESHOMA PALMATA*

Mounds of maple-like foliage support bell-shaped, waxy, pale-yellow flowers on leafy stems. Needs watching as it will begin to droop if dry. **H** 1.2m. **S** 75cm. **C** Neutral to acid soil enriched with leaf mould. **SI** August to September. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

57 *PAEONIA LACTIFLORA* 'PILLOW TALK'

The scented flowers are like perfect powder puffs and are freely produced on strong stems above dark-green leaves. Needs discreet staking to support the heavy flower heads. Reddish spring foliage a bonus. **H** 90cm. **S** 75cm. **C** Well-drained soil, will cope with clay but it has to be free draining; sun. **SI** Early to mid June. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 7a-11.

58 *PHLOMIS RUSSELIANA*

Spreads gradually with substantial, grey-green leaves. Woolly flowering stems with wreaths of pale-yellow, lipped flowers that look decorative after flowering. Needs a warm, sunny spot. AGM. **H** 80cm. **S** 80cm. **C** Most soils with good drainage; sun. **SI** Summer. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 7a-11.

59 *PULMONARIA* 'DIANA CLARE'

Forms striking rosettes with narrow, almost totally silvered, wavy-edged leaves with green rims. Large, wide-open, violet-blue flowers in early spring are a bonus. AGM. **H** 30cm. **S** 40cm. **C** Prefers part shade. **SI** Early spring. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.

60 *RODGERSIA PODOPHYLLA*

Young leaves are a rich, dark brown in spring, turning green as they expand, and often copper tinted when mature. Be patient while it develops from a slowly spreading rhizome. **H** 1.5m. **S** 1.8m. **C** Moisture-retentive, well-drained soil, enriched with leaf mould; dappled shade. **SI** Summer. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 6a-9b.

61 *SALVIA NEMEROSA* 'CARADONNA'

Bushy clumps of purple-branching stems with grey-green aromatic foliage. Violet-purple flowers need regular deadheading. AGM. **H** 50cm. **S** 30cm. **C** Well-drained soil; sun or part shade. **SI** Early summer to autumn. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 4a-10b.

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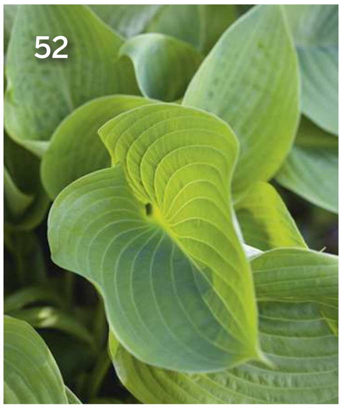
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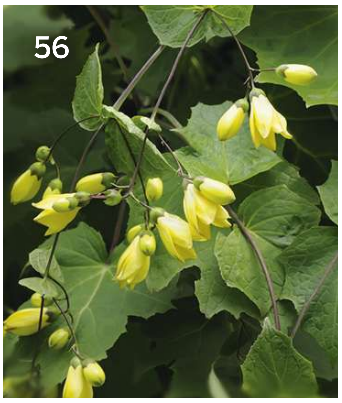
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57 JAN SMITH / GAP PHOTOS; 52 PAUL SEHEULT / GETTY; 54 MARK WINWOOD / GETTY; 61 RACHEL WARNE; 56 CORA NIELE / GETTY

62 *SEDUM* 'JOSÉ AUBERGINE'
Succulent, deep-purple foliage turns into domed heads of dusky-pink flowers. Cut stems back by half early in the season and the flowering stems will be less likely to flop later. Use it to soften the front of a mixed border. **H** 60cm. **S** 50cm. **C** Well-drained neutral or slightly alkaline soil; full sun. **SI** Midsummer to early autumn. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 7a-11.

Ferns

63 *ASPLENIUM SCOLOPENDRIUM*
Shiny, strap-shaped fronds make a good contrast to other low-growing, woodland-edge plants. Best in shade as midday sun can burn brown lesions into the fronds. Easy to grow and soon bulks up. AGM. **H** 40-60cm. **S** 30-60cm. **C** Dry or damp soil; full or part shade. **SI** All year. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

64 *DRYOPTERIS SIEBOLDII*
Medium-sized, distinctive fern with leathery triangular or broadly lance-shaped, pale-green, semi-evergreen fronds. Appreciates medium or stronger light. AGM. **H** 45-60cm. **S** 60cm. **C** Moist soil. **SI** Late spring to late autumn. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 7a-10b.

65 *DRYOPTERIS WALLICHIANA*
A striking, medium-tall fern with semi-evergreen fronds that have black scales. Makes an arresting sight when new, lance-shaped fronds are unfurling in a handsome shuttlecock pattern. Grows best in a mildly cool, humid climate. AGM. **H** 1.2m. **S** 1m. **C** Prefers medium moist soil. **SI** Spring to late autumn. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.

66 *MATTEUCCIA STRUTHIOPTERIS*
Vase-shaped clusters of feathery, plume-like fronds, forming dense stands in damp places. Can be aggressive, sending out new plants from stolons, but these are easily removed. AGM. **H** 1.5m. **S** 45cm. **C** Shade. **SI** Spring to autumn. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 2a-8b.

67 *POLYSTICHUM POLYBLEPHARUM*
Glossy, deep-green, evergreen foliage that is incredibly handsome and easy to grow. Fronds are covered in golden bristles in spring, gradually turning deep green. Cut fronds back in late spring. AGM. **H** 45-60cm. **S** 60-80cm. **C** Dry or damp soil. **SI** Year round. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

Grasses

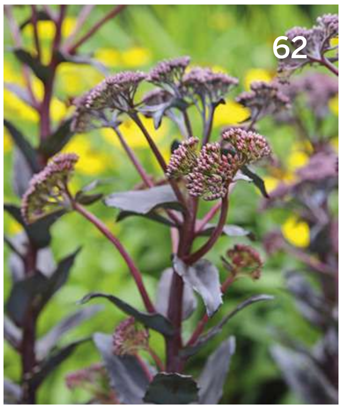
68 *ANEMANTHELE LESSONIANA*
A low-maintenance grass that resents being crowded and tends to seed around. Its arching flower heads and slightly arching foliage give movement to a border. Can be cut back in late autumn. AGM. **H** 60cm. **S** 60cm. **C** Average soil; full sun. **SI** All year. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 7a-9b.

69 *FESTUCA GLAUCA* INTENSE BLUE (='CASBLUE')
Forms dense, hemispherical clumps of blue-green leaves with flowering spikes that mature to a pale-tan colour in early autumn. Useful as an accent plant at the front of a border. **H** 25-30cm. **S** 20cm. **C** Prefers well-drained, thin, dry soil; full sun. **SI** All year, especially autumn. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.

70 *HELICTOTRICHON SEMPERVIRENS*
A good specimen plant with balls of stiff, blue-green leaves and straw-coloured flowers held well above the foliage. Can be a useful anchor plant on a corner. May be infected by rust in shade. AGM. **H** 1.2m. **S** 65cm. **C** Well-drained, humus-rich soil; sun. **SI** Midsummer. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.

71 *PANICUM VIRGATUM* 'WARRIOR'
This versatile, upright switch grass is free flowering with strong, red autumn colour. Forms a misty effect when planted en masse. Can be prone to chafer grub. **H** 1.5m. **S** 40cm. **C** Well-drained, dry soil. **SI** Winter. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

72 *STIPA GIGANTEA*
Spectacular flower stems are held high above dense, evergreen clumps of grey-green leaves. Plant to be seen against the setting sun. AGM. **H** 2.2m. **S** 1m. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** Summer. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 6a-10b. ▷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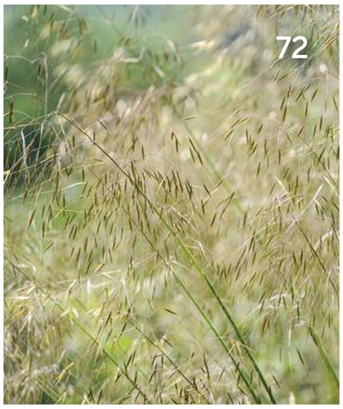
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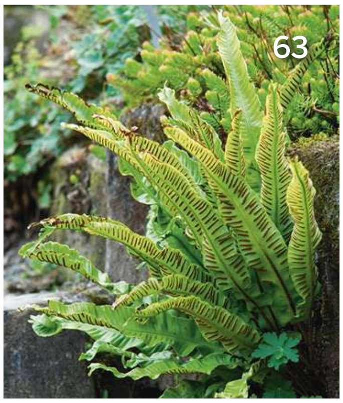
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62 & 72 JASON INGRAM; 71 MATT ANKER / GAP PHOTOS; 63 JOHN MARTIN / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 69 RICHARD BLOOM / GAP PHOTOS

▷ Ground cover

73 *ASARUM EUROPAEUM*
Kidney-shaped, glossy green leaves slowly creep along the ground, eventually making an evergreen carpet. AGM. **H** 10cm. **S** 20cm. **C** Any soil; cool, damp shade. **SI** Spring to autumn. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.

74 *BEESIA CALTHIFOLIA*
Small, round, evergreen leaves quickly form an attractive, low clump, with delicate white flowers on thin stems. A new, easy and useful all rounder. **H** 15cm. **S** 20cm. **C** Most soils; slight shade. **SI** Foliage all year. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 6a-8b.

75 *BERGENIA* 'ERIC SMITH'
Large, rounded, crinkled leaves have polished green surfaces glowing beetroot red in winter. AGM. **H** 45cm. **S** 30cm. **C** For winter interest you need drier conditions; full sun. **SI** Winter. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 6a-7b.

76 *PODOPHYLLUM VERSIPELLE* 'SPOTTY DOTTY'
Strange-looking plant with upright stems supporting deeply lobed, light-green leaves that are mottled with chocolate-brown spots. Its red fleshy flowers or fruits are hidden beneath the leaves. **H** 40cm. **S** 80cm. **C** Moderately fertile, humus-rich soil. **SI** Early summer to autumn. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 5a-8b.

77 *SAXIFRAGA UMBROSA*
A fairly well known but underused plant with small, neat, spreading rosettes of leathery leaves and sprays of little pink flowers in May. Well behaved and increases fast. **H** 7cm. **S** 10cm. **C** Well-drained soil; part shade. **SI** All year. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 5b-9b.

78 *TIARELLA WHERRYI*
Trails of pointed green leaves form complete ground cover with foamy mass of creamy white to pinkish flower spikes. Pretty, slow-spreading clumps need occasional splitting and replanting to keep plant vigorous. AGM. **H** 15cm. **S** 20cm. **C** Moist soil; shade. **SI** May to June. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 3a-10b.

Annuals & half hardies

79 *AMMI VISNAGA*
This hardy annual with white platters of cow parsley-type flowers and fine dill-like leaves has become a fashionable umbellifer. Needs good drainage and is best sown from seed in autumn, and overwintered under cover. Makes a lovely cut flower. AGM. **H** 1.25m. **S** 15cm. **C** Most well-drained soils; full sun. **SI** Midsummer. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 1a-12.

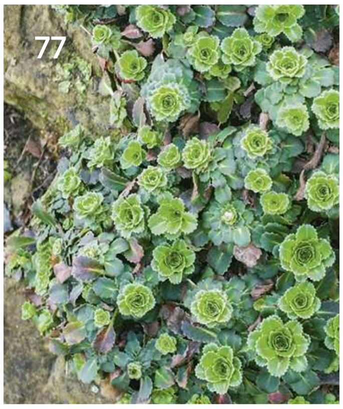
80 *DAHLIA* 'BISHOP OF LLANDAFF'
A half-hardy annual with semi-double, bright-red, peony-like flowers and dark bronze-red foliage. Either lift to store over winter or risk leaving in position and mulch heavily. AGM. **H** 1.1m. **S** 45cm. **C** Well-drained soil, enriched with leaf mould; sun. **SI** Late summer to autumn. **HR** RHS H3, USDA 7a-11.

81 *DAHLIA MERCKII*
A hardy dahlia with slender, wiry stems that produce pretty, small, single, lavender flowers with pointed petals. Comes up annually. Allow it to scramble though the base of other plants such as roses. **H** 1.25m. **S** 1m. **C** Well-drained soil; sun. **SI** Midsummer-autumn. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 7b-11.

82 *RICINUS COMMUNIS* 'NEW ZEALAND BLACK'
Tender annual with dark-red, metallic foliage. Seeds are sometimes difficult to germinate but Nick Bailey, head gardener at the Chelsea Physic Garden, suggests a 12-hour soak in tepid/warm water followed by basal heat. **H** 2m. **S** 20cm. **C** Good drainage and most soils; full sun. **SI** Midsummer to early autumn. **HR** RHS H1C, USDA 8a-11.

83 *SALVIA CONFERTIFLORA*
Very striking salvia with tall, tomato-red, spiky flower stems above mid-green foliage. Remains an upright slender plant. Will need protection over winter. Can be grown annually from cuttings. **H** 2m. **S** 1.5m. **C** Rich but free-draining soil; full sun. **SI** Autumn. **HR** RHS H2, USDA 8a-10b. ▷

83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83 JASON INGRAM; 77 JULIA BOULTON / GAP PHOTOS; 79 JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS, DESIGN SARAH RAVEN, PERCH HILL; 78 JON STOKES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 76 TORIE CHUGG

Use annuals and half hardies – grown from seed in October or February – to fill gaps in newly established gardens.

81 JASON INGRAM

▷ Bulbs

84 *ALLIUM CRISTOPHII*
Large, silvery-violet heads are supported on tall stems but its green foliage is untidy so it's best planted to come up behind something else, such as purple sage. Flower heads are slightly top heavy but decorative when dying. AGM. **H** 60cm. **S** 25cm. **C** Early summer. **SI** Midsummer. **HR** RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

85 *ARISAEMA CANDIDISSIMUM*
Emerging as a pale-pink spear, the long, white tip develops from a tightly rolled sheath, then becomes a sweetly scented, cobra-like head, appearing late in the flowering season. Set tubers 25cm deep and 30cm apart. AGM. **H** 40cm. **S** 60cm. **SI** Early summer. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 6a-9b.

86 *CAMASSIA QUAMASH*
Its bright-blue flowers appear once most other spring bulbs have finished. Plant bulbs 10cm deep and 10cm apart, and grow in borders coming up through other foliage, or naturalise in grass. **H** 40cm. **S** 5-8cm. **C** Moist, fertile soil; sun or part shade. **SI** Early summer. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 3a-9b.

87 *COLCHICUM SPECIOSUM*
Erupting into bloom in mid autumn without leaves, these extend autumnal interest. The rich, lilac-pink flowers push through other lowish foliage, such as *Pulmonaria*. Continues the garden flowering season into early autumn, and large, strap-like leaves, which emerge long after flowers, take up space all summer. AGM. **H** 20cm. **S** 25cm. **C** Deep, fertile, well-drained soil; sun. **SI** Autumn. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.

> *Bulbs – grown in pots, borders or grass – are an invaluable way to introduce life and colour from late winter until autumn and beyond.*

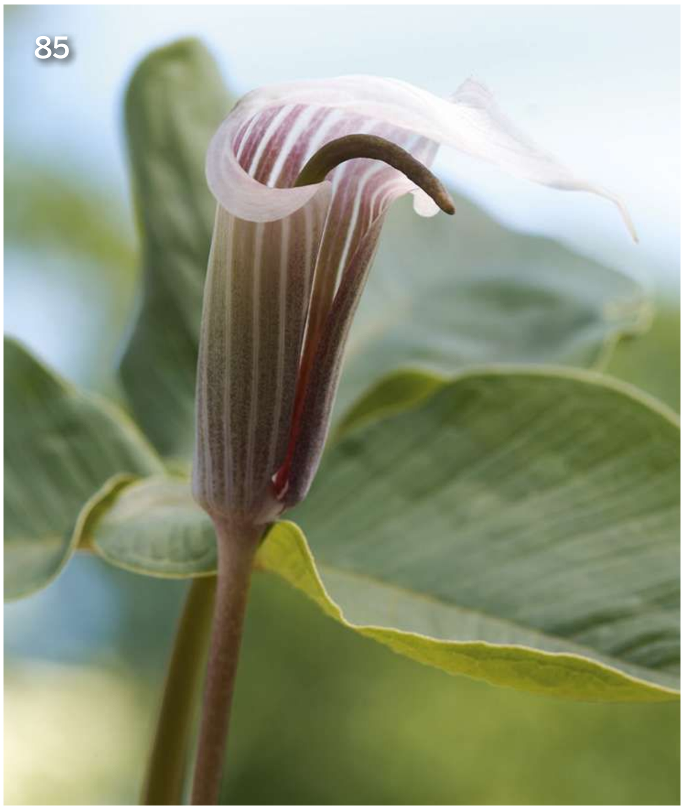
88 *ERANTHIS HYEMALIS* (TUBERGENII GROUP) 'GUINEA GOLD'
These winter aconites grow particularly well on light soil and under trees, and as a natural companion to snowdrops. Hard, misshapen, almost-black, dry tubers are best soaked overnight before planting. AGM. **H** 8-10cm. **S** 20-30cm. **C** Light soil; sun. **SI** Late winter. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 5a-7b.

89 *ERYTHRONIUM* 'PAGODA'
Dog's tooth violets are one of the joys of spring and many different cultivars are now available. The pale-yellow, swept-back Turk's cap petals of 'Pagoda' are supremely elegant. Leaves are slightly mottled. I grow mine in quite dry conditions at the base of a low stone wall but dappled shade is recommended. Buy damp, packed in autumn, and do not let dry out. AGM. **H** 30cm. **S** 12-15cm. **C** Dappled shade under deciduous trees. **SI** Mid spring. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.

90 *EUCOMIS COMOSA* 'SPARKLING BURGUNDY'
Although only borderline hardy, these can give a late-summer boost to borders. Fleshy, strange creatures with a pineapple tuft of leaves set on top of a cylinder of flowers. In rich soil they tend to flop and are not easy to stake unobtrusively. **H** 90cm. **S** 3.5-4m. **C** Warm, fertile soil; full sun. Water during summer. **SI** Late summer to autumn. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 6b-9b.

91 *GALANTHUS* 'S ARNOTT'
The more common snowdrops – *Galanthus nivalis* and *G. nivalis* 'Flore Pleno' – are quite lovely when massed, but this is one of the best as a garden plant, quickly forming very handsome clumps of rounded, large flowers. AGM. **H** 20cm. **S** 15-20cm. **C** Well-drained, humus-rich soil; part shade. **SI** February. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

92 *GLADIOLUS* 'ATOM'
Long overlooked as an attractive garden plant, smaller gladioli are now back in fashion. For best results buy fresh corms each year, or try lifting and storing somewhere dry and free from frost. Plant in full sun in borders with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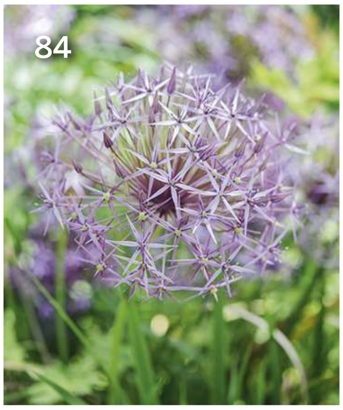
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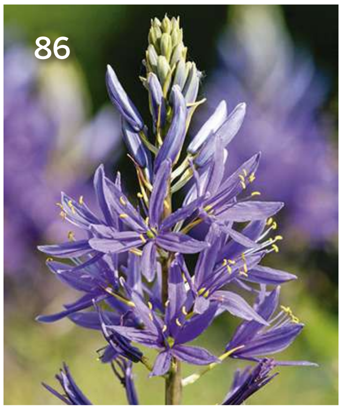
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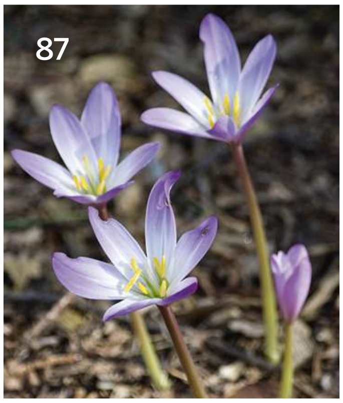
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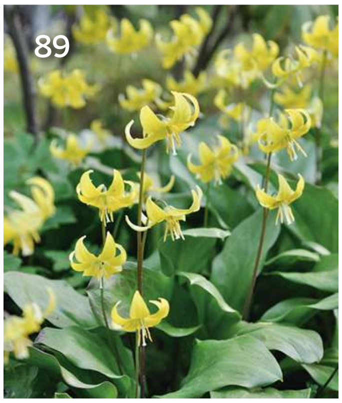
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85 TORIE CHUGG; 84 JASON INGRAM; 86 OLIVIER PARENT / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO;
87 JULIE DANSEREAU / GAP PHOTOS; 89 STEFFEN HAUSER / BOTANIKFOTO / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

good drainage in spring. **H** 60cm. **S** 70-90cm. **C** Deep, fertile, well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** Summer. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 5b-10b.

93 *LILIUM* 'PIZZAZZ'
I received these lily bulbs from a friend and they make a great impact in my summer garden. The pale-orange, curved-back petals show off well, and they don't seem to attract lily beetle. Vigorous with a 1.2m stem that is helped by discreet staking, they are in flower for a long time. Plant 15-20cm apart. **H** 1.2m. **S** 8-10cm. **C** Heads in sun; feet in shade. **SI** Midsummer. **HR** USDA 4a-8b.

94 *LILIUM REGALE*
Produces a stiff stem with narrow leaves and an umbel of five to ten large trumpet flowers, glistening white with a yellow throat and an outside purple flush. Easy and very fragrant. I plant the bulbs in plastic pots and sink these into their final position in early summer as a glamorous scented treat. AGM. **H** 1.2m. **S** 10cm. **C** Most soil conditions but needs sun. **SI** Midsummer. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 3a-10b.

95 *NARCISSUS* 'HAWERA'
A delightful multi-headed and deliciously scented, pale-yellow daffodil with reflexed petals. Flower heads come into bloom in succession so each stem seems to last for a long time. Thin, rush-like foliage is an advantage. Plant 10cm deep and 10cm apart ideally somewhere warm. Looks good appearing through evergreen ferns or naturalised in grass. AGM. **H** 30cm. **S** 20cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** Mid March. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

96 *NARCISSUS* 'THALIA'
White, swept-back flowers with a simple shape, along with longevity and vigour, make this a popular choice for both naturalising in grass or borders. Plant in full sun in August or late September to allow it to root. **H** 30cm. **S** 10cm. **C** Acid to neutral, slightly moist soil; full sun. **SI** Mid spring. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-8a.

97 *NERINE BOWDENII*
Once established, these stars of the autumn garden enjoy being congested. Elegant, green stems hold long, thin, pointed buds, before exploding into a round head of bright-pink flower. The stamens curl out and up, followed by bright-green, strappy leaves that remain until spring. AGM. **H** 70cm. **S** 80cm. **C** Good drainage and full sun. **SI** Late autumn into early winter. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.

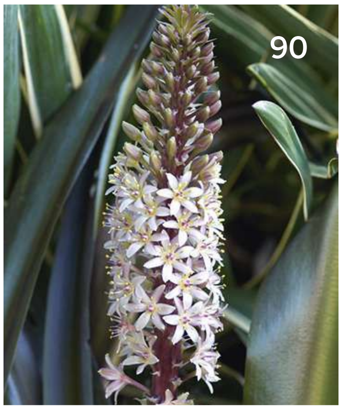
98 *STERNBERGIA LUTEA*
The crocus-like flowers push through brilliant gold and come as a surprise in autumn. When happy they will build up large colonies. They like to be baked during their summer dormancy so plant in good, fast-draining soil, 10-15cm deep and 10cm apart. AGM. **H** 10cm. **S** 10cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun. **SI** Autumn. **HR** RHS H4, USDA 7a-10b.

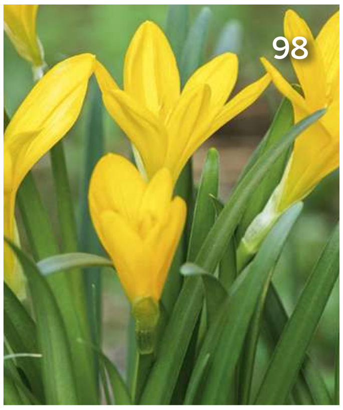
99 *TRILLIUM CHLOROPETALUM*
These are a fairly new obsession of mine, and suit a wildish, woody background but not competitive neighbours. Gradually, they make a good clump. Mulch with leaf mould so that they do not dry out. Easiest to acquire by buying in pots. **H** 40cm. **S** 20cm. **C** Rich, acid soil that does not dry out; partial or full shade. **SI** Late spring. **HR** RHS H5, USDA 6a-9b.

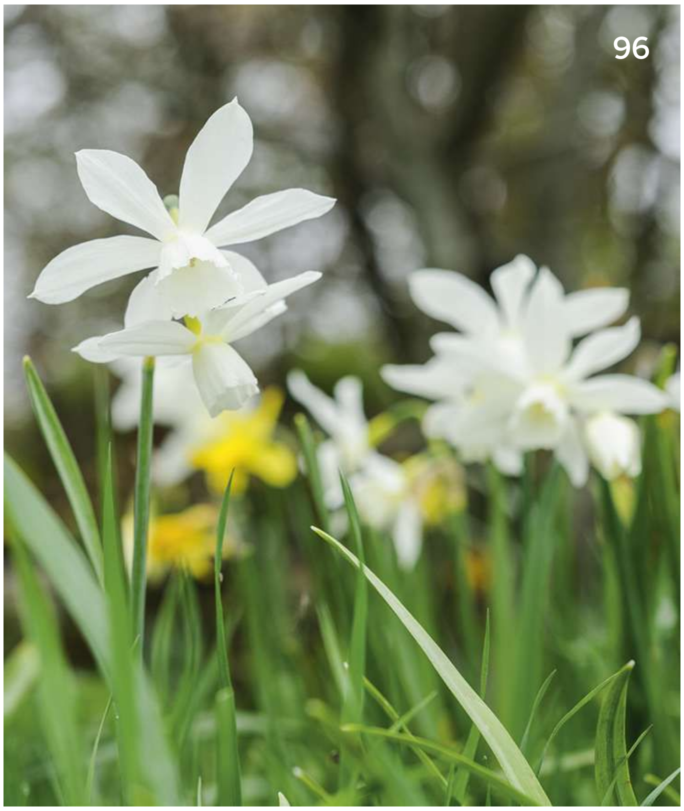
100 *TULIPA* 'BALLERINA'
A most striking lily-flowered tulip with vivid-orange, reflexed, graceful flowers on strong wiry stems. Elegant and well balanced. Good in pots planted in two or three layers deep. AGM. **H** 56cm. **S** 30cm. **C** Well-drained soil; full sun. **HR** RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b. ◻

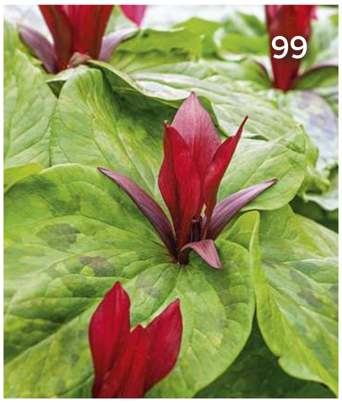
Useful information
Rosemary Alexander is principal of The English Gardening School. Find out more at **englishgardeningschool.co.uk**

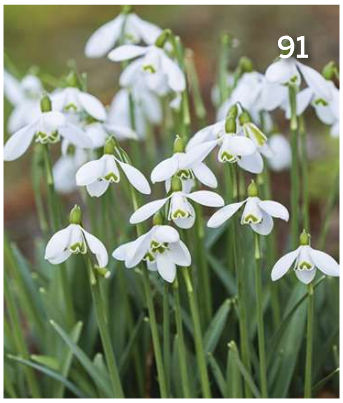
Reader offer
Readers can enjoy a 15 per cent discount on plants at Crocus (**crocus.co.uk**), which offers many of the plants chosen by Rosemary. For details see page 111.



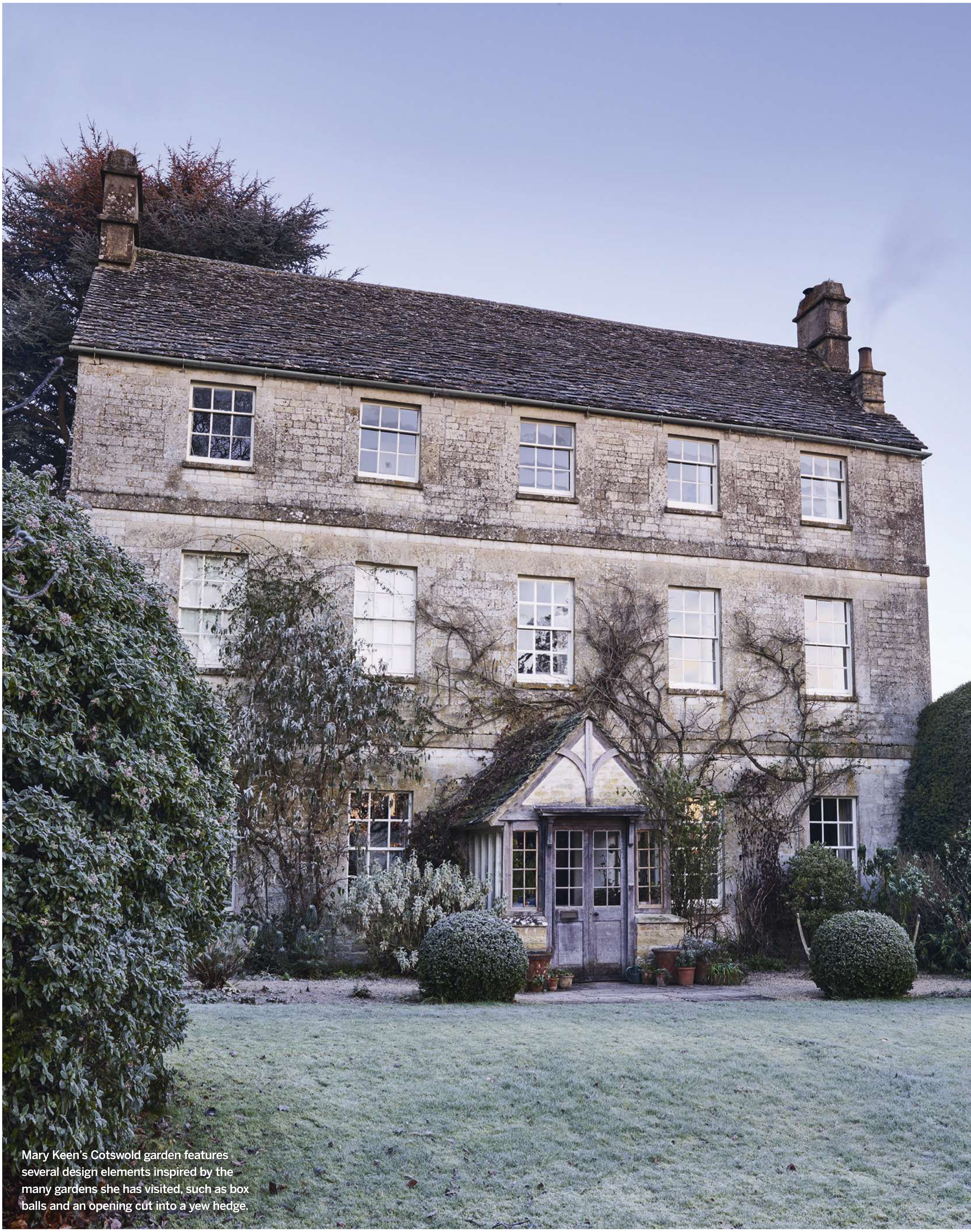




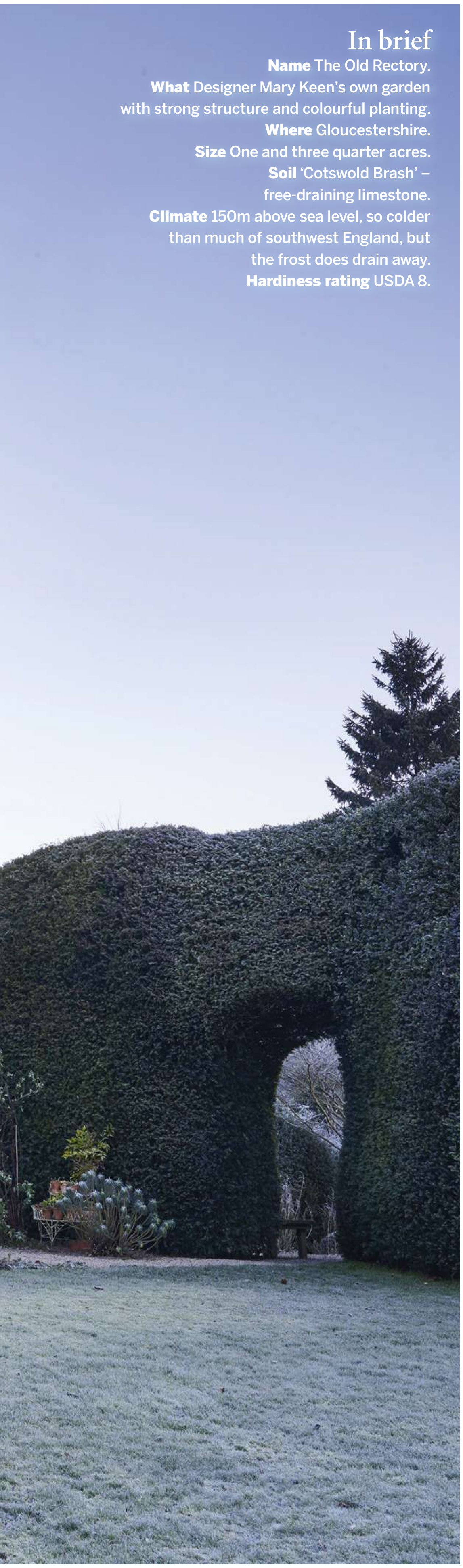




90 TORIE CHUGG; 98 MARC DBR / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 99 DAVE ZUBRASKI / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 91 DAVE ZUBRASKI / GAP PHOTOS; 96 JASON INGRAM



Mary Keen's Cotswold garden features several design elements inspired by the many gardens she has visited, such as box balls and an opening cut into a yew hedge.



In brief

Name The Old Rectory.
What Designer Mary Keen's own garden with strong structure and colourful planting.
Where Gloucestershire.
Size One and three quarter acres.
Soil 'Cotswold Brash' – free-draining limestone.
Climate 150m above sea level, so colder than much of southwest England, but the frost does drain away.
Hardiness rating USDA 8.

Seasonal style

In the first of four seasonal visits to the Cotswold garden of writer and designer Mary Keen, we look at how structure plays a leading role in winter

WORDS MARY KEEN PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM

In 1992 we moved to the Cotswolds, to a prim and proper rectory set in a stony garden full of conifers. Cars parked between the Virginia creeper-covered façade and the only lawn. Such unpromising ingredients dismayed me; the soil was pitiful and the site was steep. What became our kitchen garden at the top, was 15 metres higher than the lowest point, the dell, next to the lane. Once we had banished the cars to a small yard near the barn and cleared the shrubs at the end of the lawn, we owned a view of open fields with cattle grazing and we could sit on a sunny gravel terrace under the south-facing windows. I never want to see cars from the house if it can be avoided, even if it means carrying bags in the rain. The country around here is beautiful and shutting it out would be madness. Unless the view is in the eye of prevailing winds, I would always want a sight of surrounding landscape. To create another glimpse of a small wood, a giant thuja hedge was replaced with yew. There was already a large existing lump of yew near the building with a holly tree inside it as high as two thirds of the house. We cut that back hard over two springs, to keep the height below the first-floor windows. This makes a protected area for a table and six chairs and the gravel is home to many self-seeding plants, but the porch has an apron of paving stones for pots, which avoids stones being brought into the house.

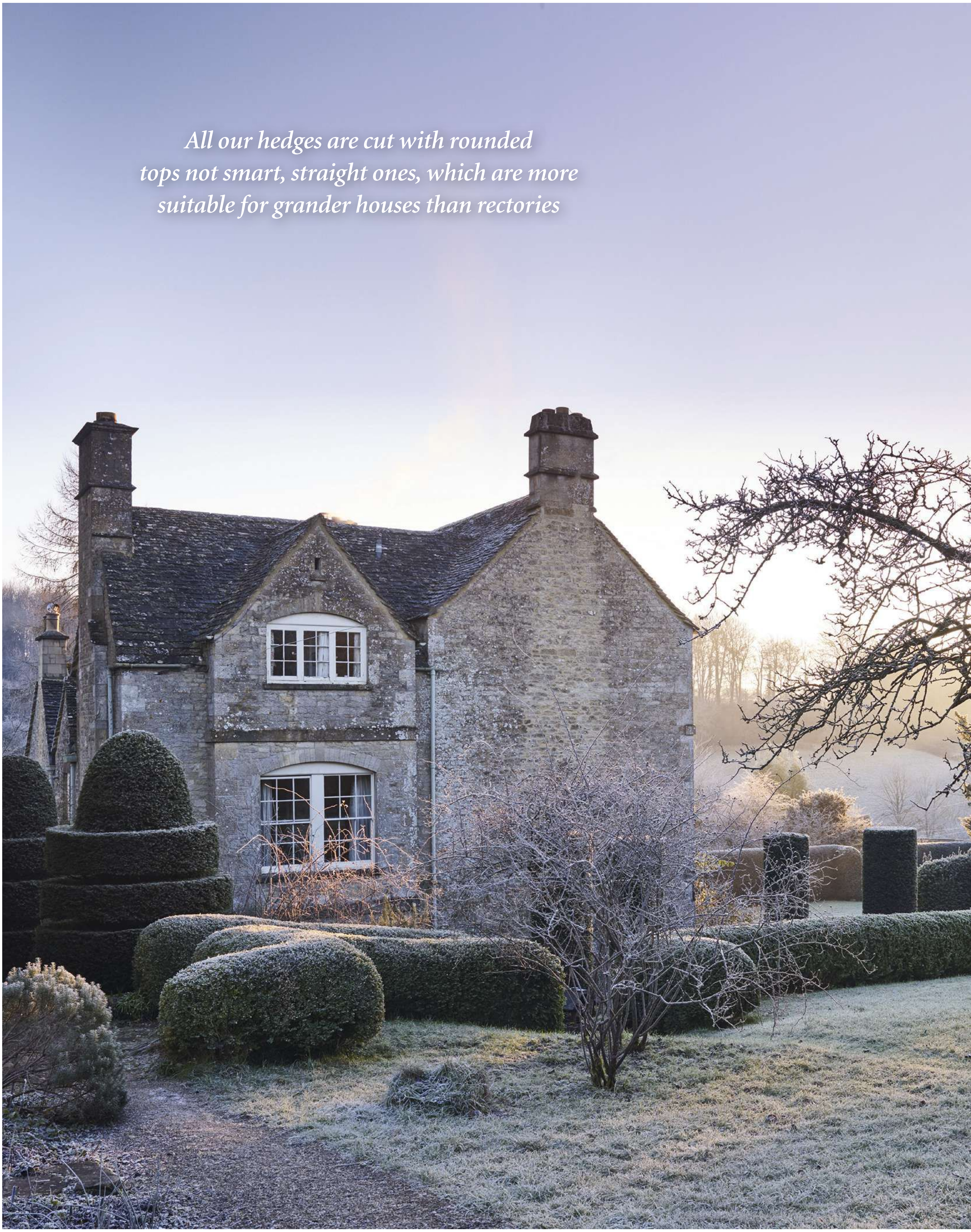
I love winter, even though it means at least five months when trees are leafless and most flowers go underground, so I add things to provide interest and colour on chilly everyday routes, with scented *Sarcococca* by the backdoor door to welcome me home.

Topiary is a Cotswold feature and there is nothing like it for furnishing a garden all through the year. Vegetable sculpture is evergreen and can give height and drama to empty beds. There are box balls outside the front door (*Buxus sempervirens* 'Rotundifolia' is fast growing if you want large specimens). The keyhole opening in the huge yew arch leads to a view of the sunken summer garden where there are four sentinels of fastigiate *Buxus sempervirens* 'Graham Blandy' around a copper planter. The inspiration for this was the cottage garden at Sissinghurst, but there the upright evergreens are Irish yews, not box. Things seen in other gardens often influence my designs and at home there is a curling hedge of box around the orchard, which I remembered noticing round an orchard at Hinton Ampner in Hampshire, but all our hedges are cut with rounded tops, not smart, straight ones, which are more suitable for grander houses than rectories. The four box balls in the kitchen garden where the paths meet were inspired by a similar effect at Heale House in Wiltshire, but ours, after a bout of box disease, are now *Lonicera nitida*.

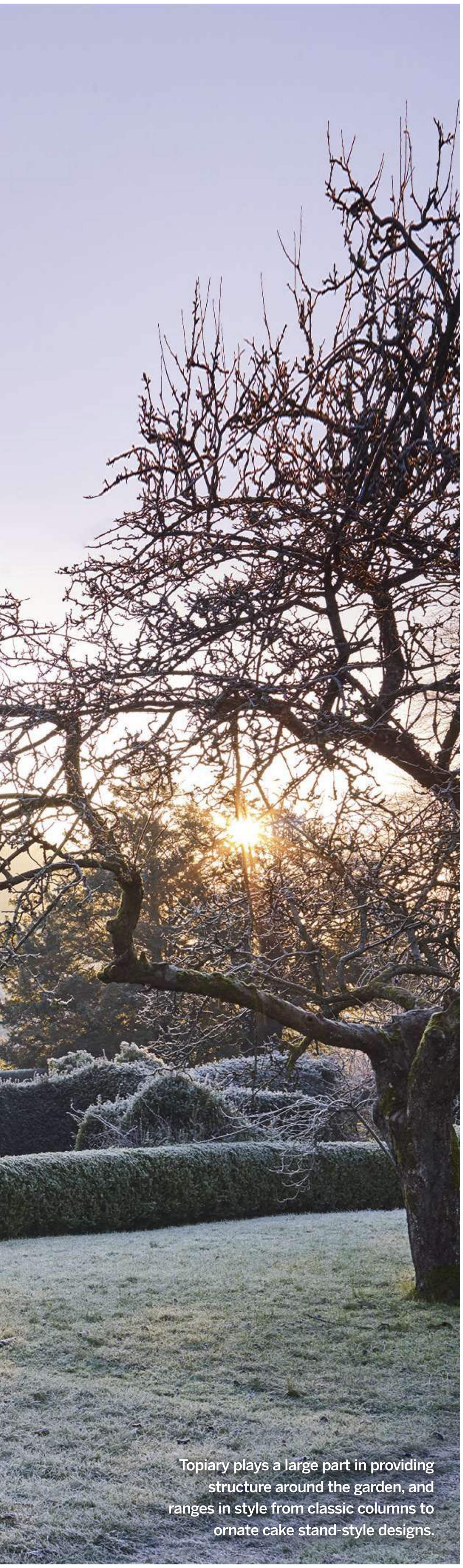
READER EVENT

Don't miss Mary Keen's talk on why we should all stop worrying about creating the perfect garden and learn to embrace the wild at the *Gardens Illustrated* Festival, 25-26 March 2017. See page 9 or go to **gardensfestival.com** for details and how to book tickets.

Turn over for Mary's tips on structure and plants for winter ▷



All our hedges are cut with rounded tops not smart, straight ones, which are more suitable for grander houses than rectories



Topiary plays a large part in providing structure around the garden, and ranges in style from classic columns to ornate cake stand-style designs.

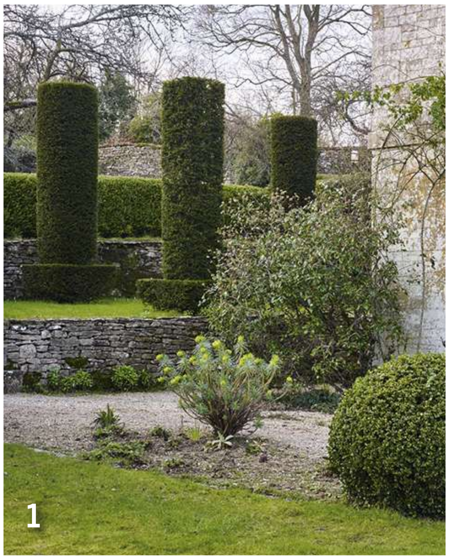
Structure and materials

Adapting what you see in other places is important, provided it does not jar with what is local. No matter how much I might admire brick paths in another garden, I would rarely use them in a location where stone was the dominant material. Below the orchard, on eye level with the first floor windows, we broke the height with two retaining stone walls to make a small terrace outside the west face of the house. The terrace **(main picture and 1)** makes a narrow lawn for small bulbs, with four columns of yew to echo the tiny church behind the house. Making two flights of stone steps up to the orchard opposite the window opened up the sense of a view. Where boundaries or hills block the sightlines, any gap, or gate, or door can make you think there is more to see beyond.

The door at the back of the small yard behind the house **(2)** opens to steps that lead down through a shed into the sunken summer garden. A building that leads into a different part of the garden is always surprising. For one client we made a door in a wall that opened into the kitchen garden via a display greenhouse.

I like the ease and cheapness that gravel affords when it is used for paths, but around a copper planter **(3)**, which sits in at the centre of the summer garden, are setts from the old stables, and in a couple of places – the small yard at the back and outside the greenhouse – we have used uncut pieces of limestone, which was always traditional around vernacular buildings. York pavers are too dressy if you are trying to avoid the makeover look.

When plants fail, one idea is to use a beautiful pot while you think of a replacement. The white Brooke Pottery urn **(4)** stood in for an *Elaeagnus* 'Quicksilver', which collapsed one ▷



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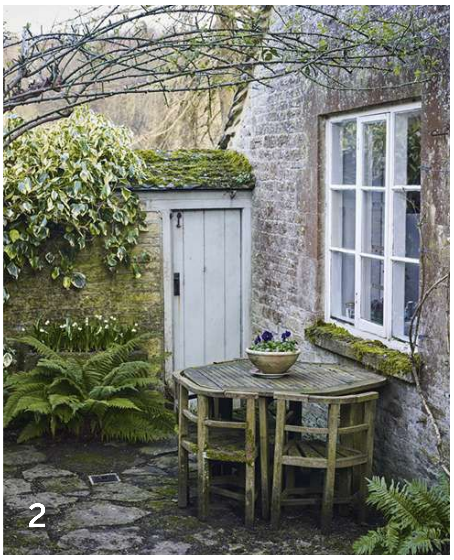

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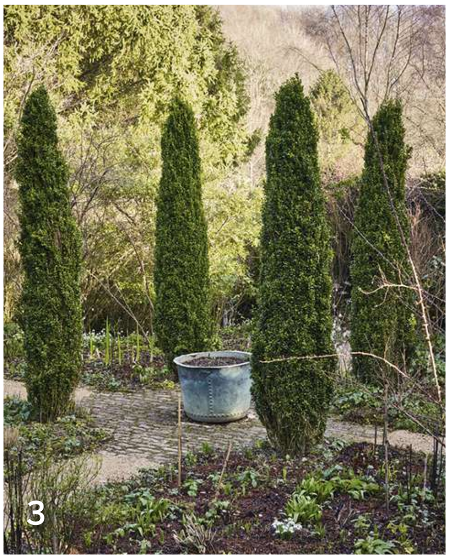

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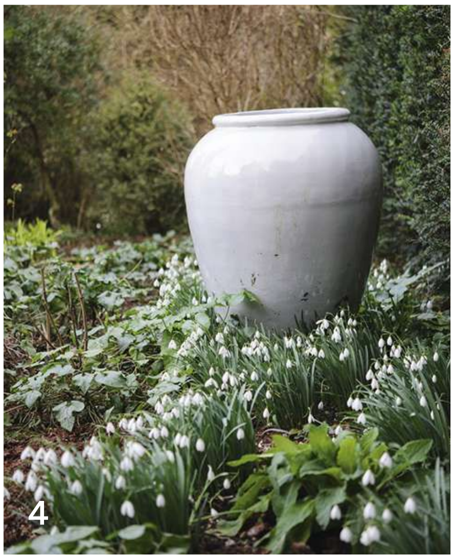

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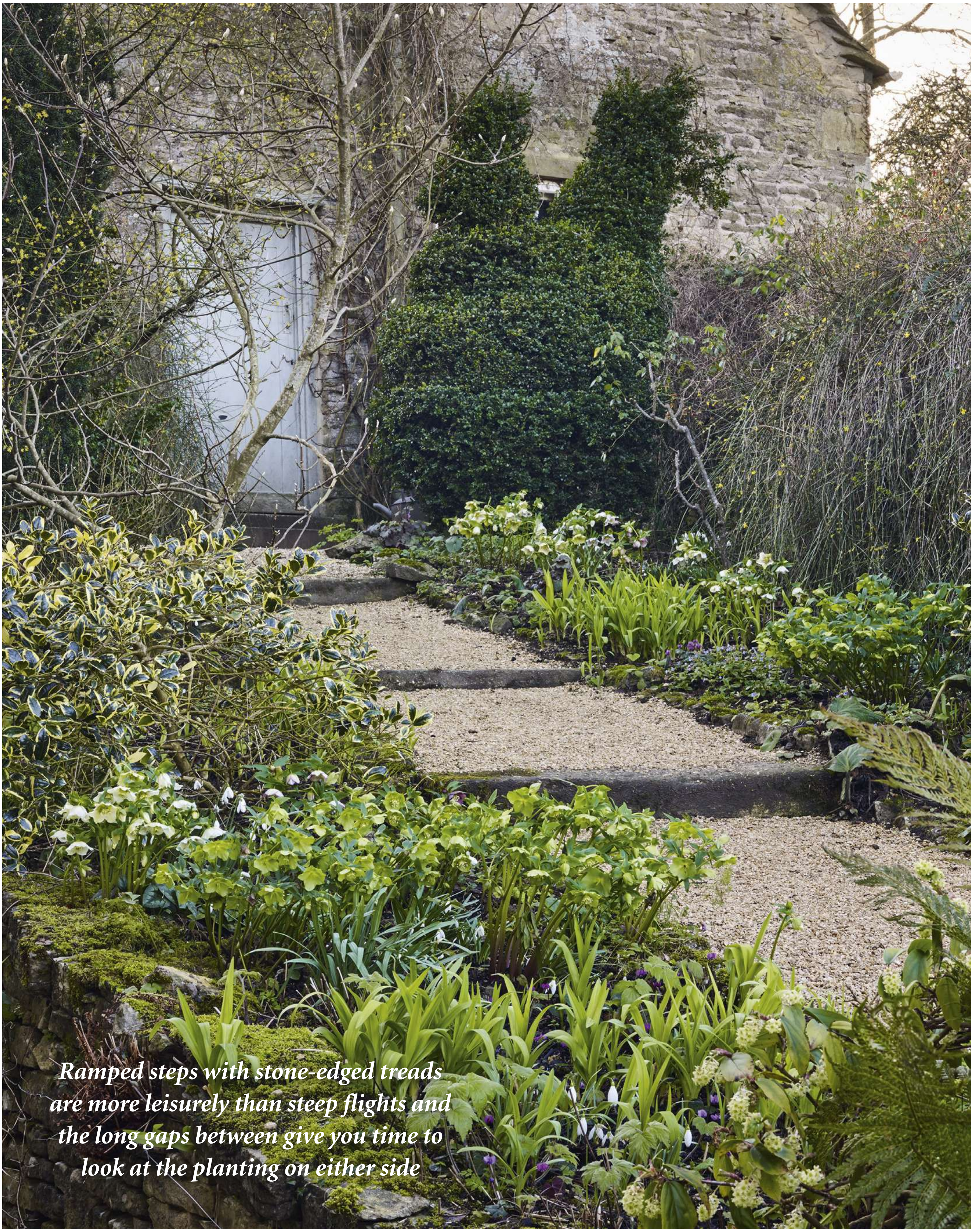
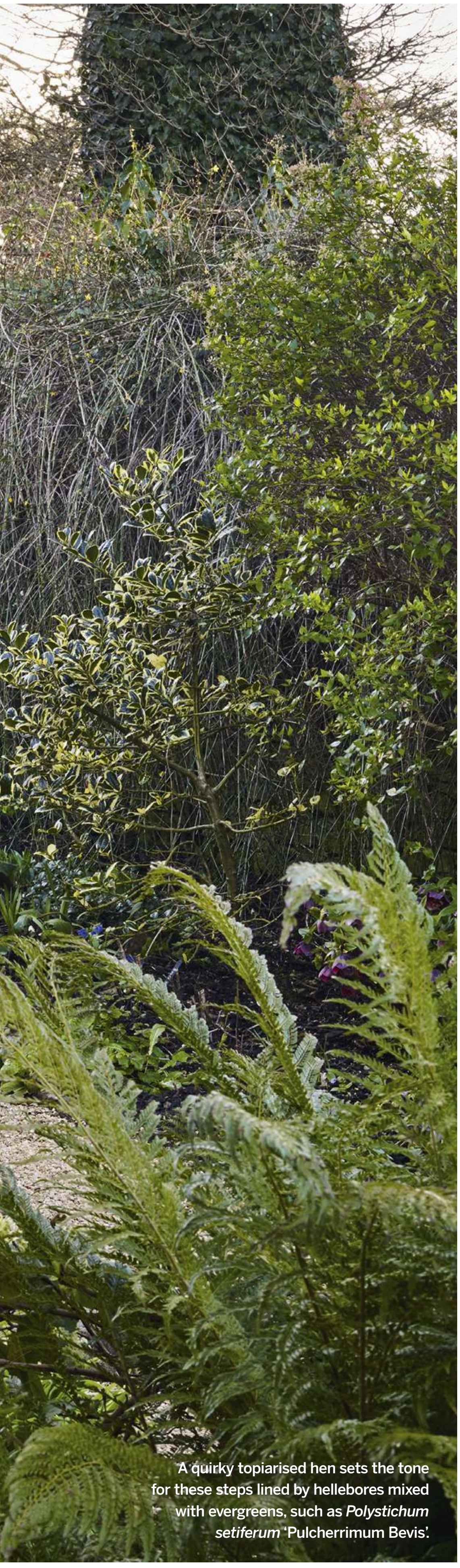


Ramped steps with stone-edged treads are more leisurely than steep flights and the long gaps between give you time to look at the planting on either side

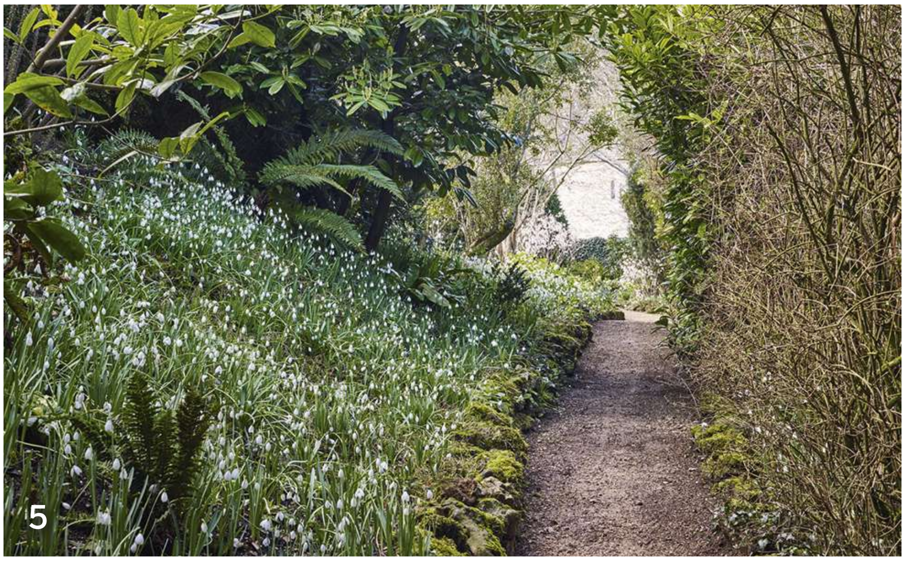


A quirky topiarised hen sets the tone for these steps lined by hellebores mixed with evergreens, such as *Polystichum setiferum* 'Pulcherrimum Bevis'.

▷ spring. We often use these elegant pots around a smart swimming pool, but I also think they work as improvised singletons in unexpected settings.

The path at the back of the house **(main picture, left)** between the hellebore beds is steep, but ramped steps with stone-edged treads are more leisurely than steep flights. A fall of 2.5cm in 30cm is reasonable and the long gaps between give you time to look at the planting on either side. The gravel does drift a bit, but sweeping the treads takes seconds. Under the gravel is hoggin, which is a traditional material for paths and drives, and I might use this without a gravel topping in a less gardened area. Permeable paths are vital to stop water running off on a slope like this. The path is wide enough to allow plants to spill over on to the gravel, but down the east boundary of the garden, where we left an old hedge of *Philadelphus* and laurel, the route from the dell to the view of the church is only wide enough for one person to walk between the bank of *Galanthus* 'S Arnott' **(5)** snowdrops and the hedge. The path is edged with large, rough stones, which stop the soil from the bank falling on to the path. Design manuals frown on narrow paths, but I like being alone in the garden, surrounded by plants. 'S Arnott' is a large-flowered snowdrop and when these are out, the scent in that confined space is incredible. But the light at the end with the view of the church is important. Without it, the walk might feel too enclosed.

Topiary and hedging helps to punctuate the garden. The hen **(see left)** at the top of the hellebore beds is a good full stop beside the door to the school room. Like the cake stand topiaries **(6)**, it needs careful cutting but the advent of the Japanese tripod ladder has made trimming these tall pieces far less nerve-wracking than it used to be. For the tricky things, such as beaks and tails, we use a bit of wire to outline the shape, but a whimsical piece, such as this does not need to be as precisely shaped as the four yew columns on the small terrace **(7)**. ▷



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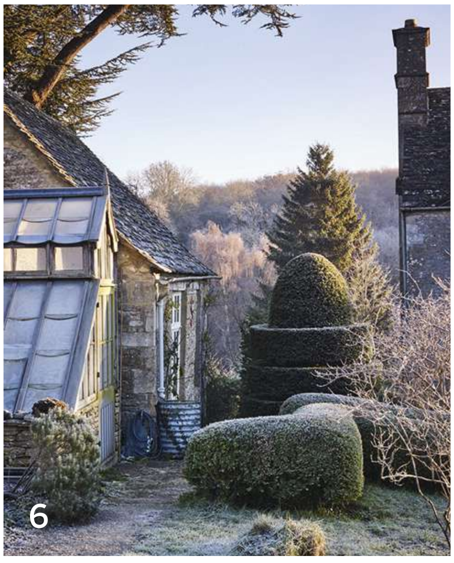

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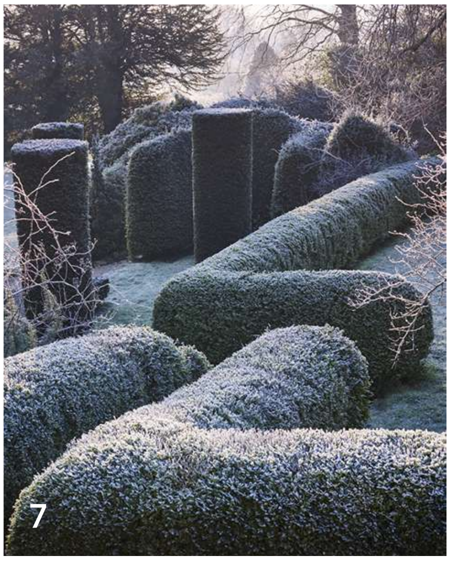

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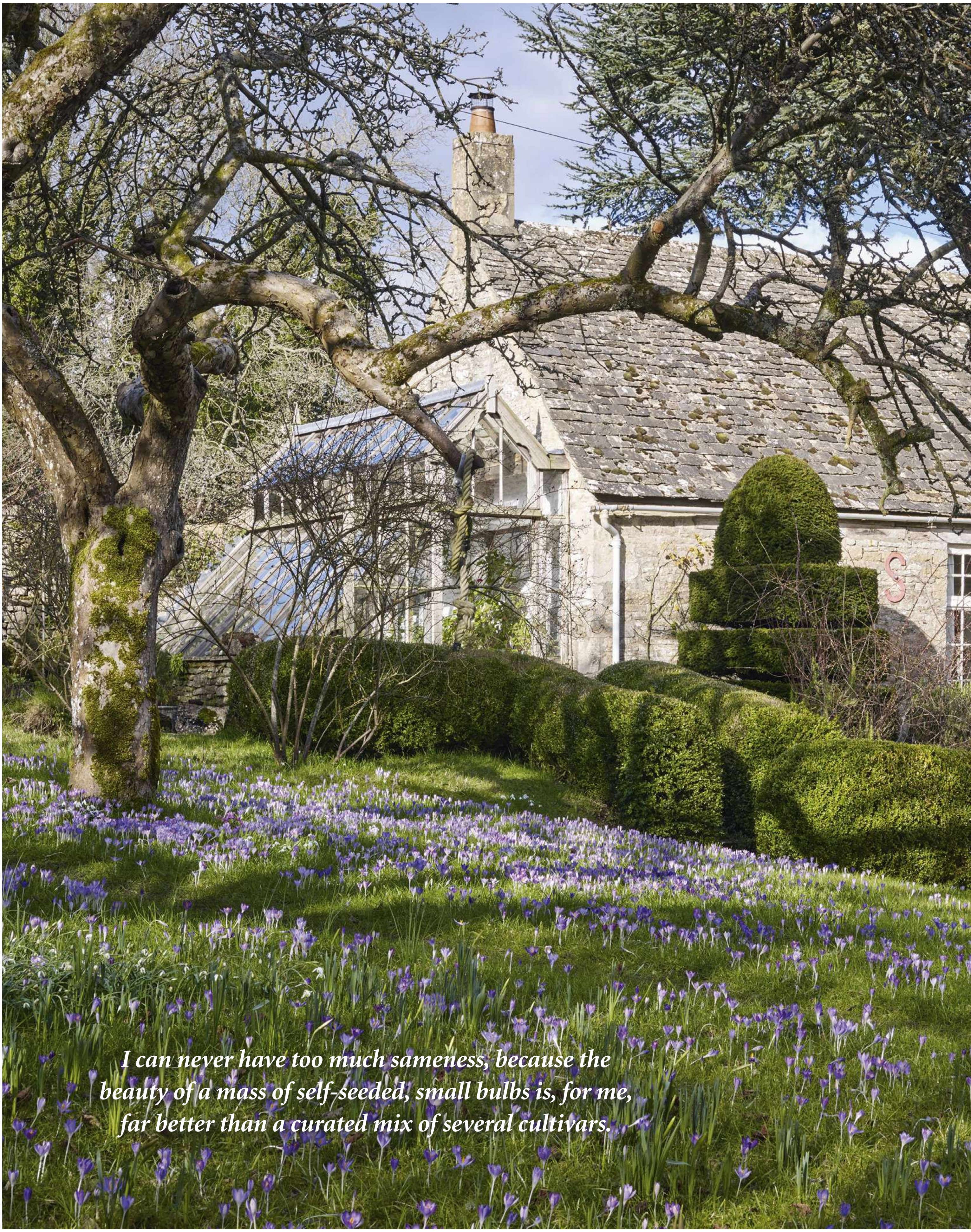
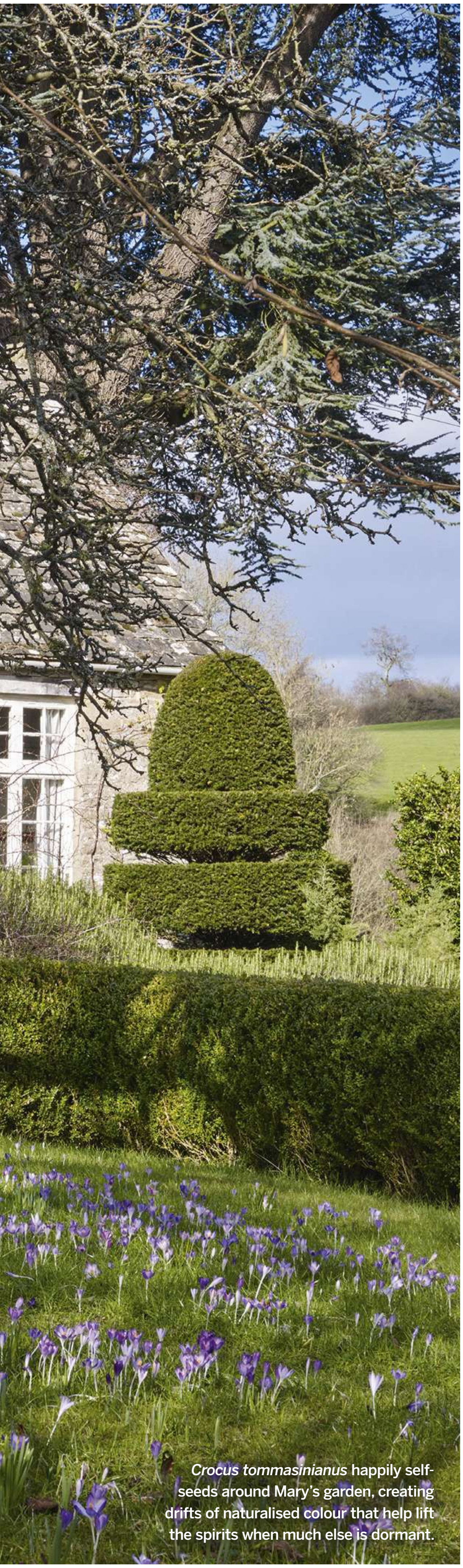


I can never have too much sameness, because the beauty of a mass of self-seeded, small bulbs is, for me, far better than a curated mix of several cultivars.



Crocus tommasinianus happily self-seeds around Mary's garden, creating drifts of naturalised colour that help lift the spirits when much else is dormant.

Plant interest

Winter flowers are some of my favourites. When we left our Berkshire garden to move here, I never thought I would see the *Crocus tommasinianus* **(main picture and 11)** pooling over as much ground as they did after 17 years in our last garden. This is the species, not a hybrid named for its size or colour and when it is happy it seeds and spreads everywhere. The silvery-mauve, delicate flowers land on the terrace and under the hazels on the bank above the car park, and even sometimes in the gravel. Now the crocuses are so well established, I have added other early things in the orchard, some *Cyclamen coum* **(8)** and double snowdrops *Galanthus* 'Lady Beatrix Stanley', as well as *G. plicatus* 'Augustus', which is less prone to virus in grass than it is in beds. Small daffodils and narcissi will follow, but the late January display is the first thrill of the new year. The cyclamen are happier at the end of the drive beneath trees than they are in the grass and they also seed themselves freely. I try to keep them separate from the aconites, but I usually fail, and in winter such flowery exuberance is so welcome that you can't be too fussy about colour. Anyway, I can never have too much sameness, because the beauty of a mass of self-seeded, small bulbs is, for me, far better than a curated mix of several cultivars.

Snowdrops are a Cotswold speciality and we have masses now, but I like garden-worthy ones you can spot from several paces. Hellebores are another winter pleasure, although I prefer the rounded, cup shape of the Ballard strains **(9)** to starrier flowers. I had a preference for dark hellebores when we moved, but I now think the pale creams and greens and yellows show up better against winter black earth. The green-flowered *Ribes laurifolium* **(10)** and the evergreen *Polystichum setiferum* 'Pulcherrimum Bevis' are a green tonic before the leaves arrive. □

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Joe Sharman

Known to galanthophiles the world over as the snowdrop grower with the Midas touch, the Monksilver Nursery owner came to wider acclaim when his snowdrop struck gold on eBay

WORDS WIDGET FINN PORTRAIT CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Joe Sharman suggests meeting at Monksilver, his nursery near Cambridge. It proves difficult to find, which I later discover is deliberate. The first two locals I ask have never heard of the nursery, the third advises: "Look out for a gap in the hedge."

Through the gap, up a track and in a circle of rough grass we sit in the sun on rickety white plastic chairs. Behind us a tall swathe of meadow grass and wild honeysuckle tumble through the hedge. It is high summer, but Joe Sharman is talking snowdrops. "I established Monksilver Nursery in 1989," he says. "But snowdrops were just a sideline while I concentrated on developing the rarer herbaceous plants. Then the herbaceous market went into decline and I decided to focus on snowdrops."

The recent explosion of interest in snowdrops has been compared to the tulip mania that hit the Netherlands in the 17th century, when rare tulip bulbs cost more than a small house. The current vogue is partly down to Joe himself, who hit the headlines in 2015 when his *Galanthus plicatus* 'Golden Fleece' was sold on eBay for £1,390. Over the past 15 years he has been a major influence in expanding the snowdrop market and now every weekend from mid January to mid March snowdrop gardens across the country open to the public.

Like many plantsmen, his horticultural roots go back to his childhood. He often stayed with his grandmother and aunt who were very keen gardeners. "I was already gardening aged four, and still grow *Kniphofia* 'Atlanta', which was my favourite as a child."

Joe went to Writtle College in 1981. "It was the only practical horticultural course at the time. Afterwards I spent nine years as a journeyman, working in a nursery in California, then at Hillier, Bernhards in Rugby and Langthorns. My interest switched from trees and shrubs to herbaceous plants where the lead time is shorter."

Douglas Dawson a professional gardener and photographer Stephen Passler became his mentors. "They could see I was young and keen, and they were very generous, introducing me to all the important nurseries with interesting stock."

When Joe established Monksilver Nursery he quickly built a reputation for propagating and supplying unusual plants. He claims to be the first nursery, in 1991, to hold plant sales that included other specialist growers, and established a format that has been copied widely by other nurseries, including Great Dixter. But despite a successful mail-order business his high-value herbaceous plants were not making money – which is when snowdrops took over.

Joe's pivotal snowdrop moment came in 1986 with a phone call from his mother Esther who had spotted a yellow flower while she was walking on Wandlebury Ring near Cambridge. "Snowdrops are normally white and green, and the rare yellow ones were always weak. But this example was large and vigorous." Bill Clarke, Wandlebury's warden, gave Joe a plant, kept one for himself and another went to Cambridge University Botanic Gardens. The rest were sold for £1,000, about £25 each, to a Dutch bulb company – and none survived.

When Joe's bulb, named *Galanthus plicatus* 'Wendy's Gold' after the warden's wife, produced a small clump he put a photo in the RHS magazine *The Garden* and was overwhelmed with the response, which included an invitation to a very select snowdrop swapping club.

"Around 20 galanthophiles had lunches during the season, led by Primrose Warburg the formidable doyenne of snowdrops. I was only 27 and highly nervous of joining these very experienced gardeners."

It was a small and intense world, but as Joe gained knowledge and developed a collection of snowdrops he felt they deserved a wider audience. In 1997 he started an annual Galanthus Gala that helped to kick start the market, and now every February galanthomania reaches fever pitch as specialist nurseries and private individuals chase sought-after specimens.

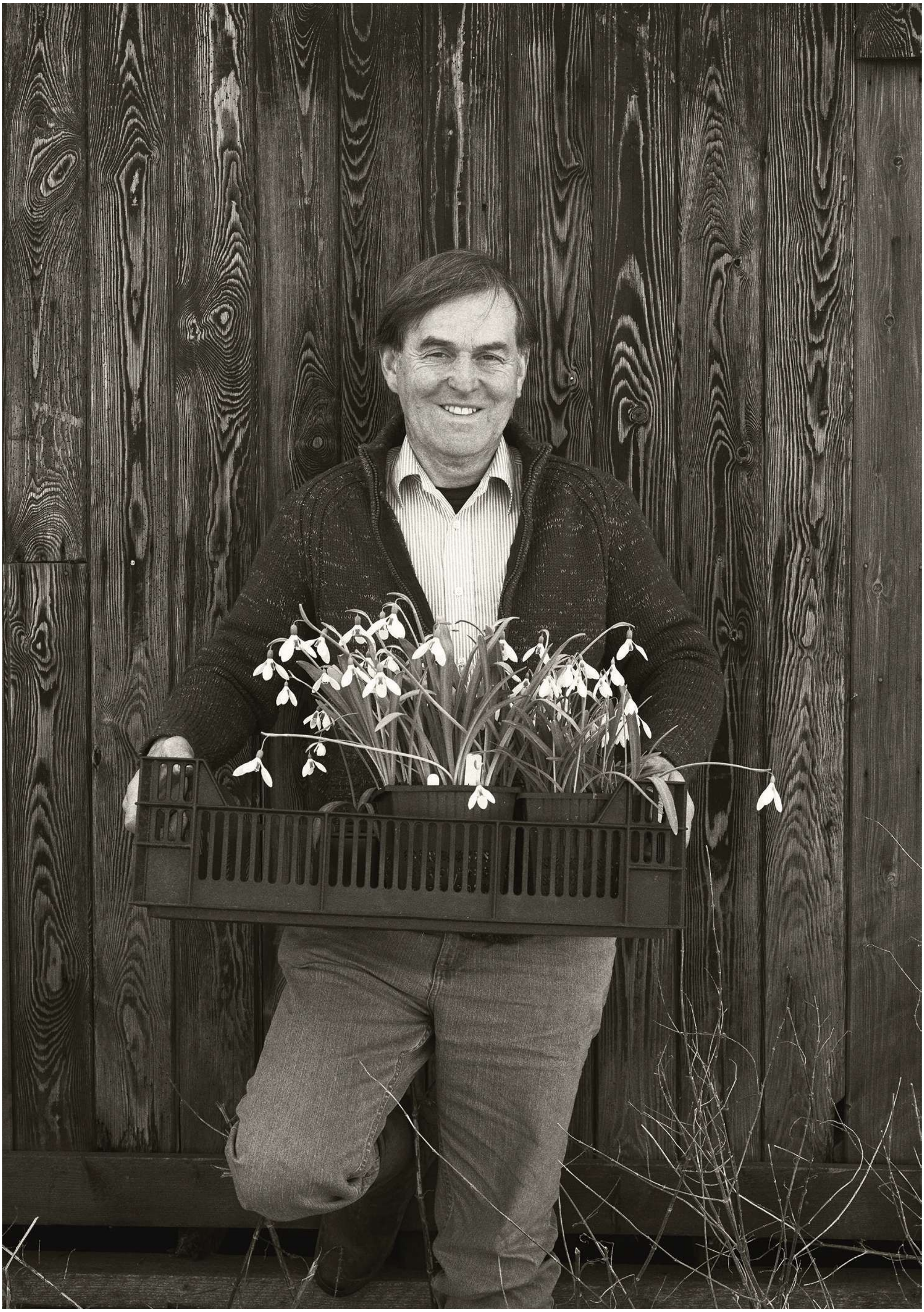
Joe is an astute businessman, spotting early on the potential of selling rare snowdrops on eBay. In 2011 his first yellow snowdrop, fetched a (then) record £747. He explains that the high prices reflect the time these new cultivars take to develop. "I was the first person to breed specific cultivars. I aimed to develop a yellow snowdrop but it takes over 18 years from the first seed to having enough stock to sell – so it's lucky I started so young."

He won't predict how long the snowdrop craze will last but he's turning his attention back to the main herbaceous nursery while focussing on the expanding snowdrop market in Europe. His unusual cultivars will always have customers, but plant theft is on the increase. With his rarer snowdrops valued at £500 a bulb, he guards them ruthlessly, even pulling off the heads so they can't be identified. Monksilver Nursery may be hard to find, but his stock of valuable snowdrops – in another location – is even more carefully hidden. □

USEFUL INFORMATION
Monksilver Nursery, Oakington Road, Cottenham,
Cambridgeshire CB24 8TW.
Tel 01954 251555, monksilvernursery.co.uk

NEXT MONTH Plantsman Jimi Blake.

> *"I aimed to develop a yellow snowdrop, but it takes over 18 years from the first seed to having enough stock to sell – so it's lucky I started so young"*



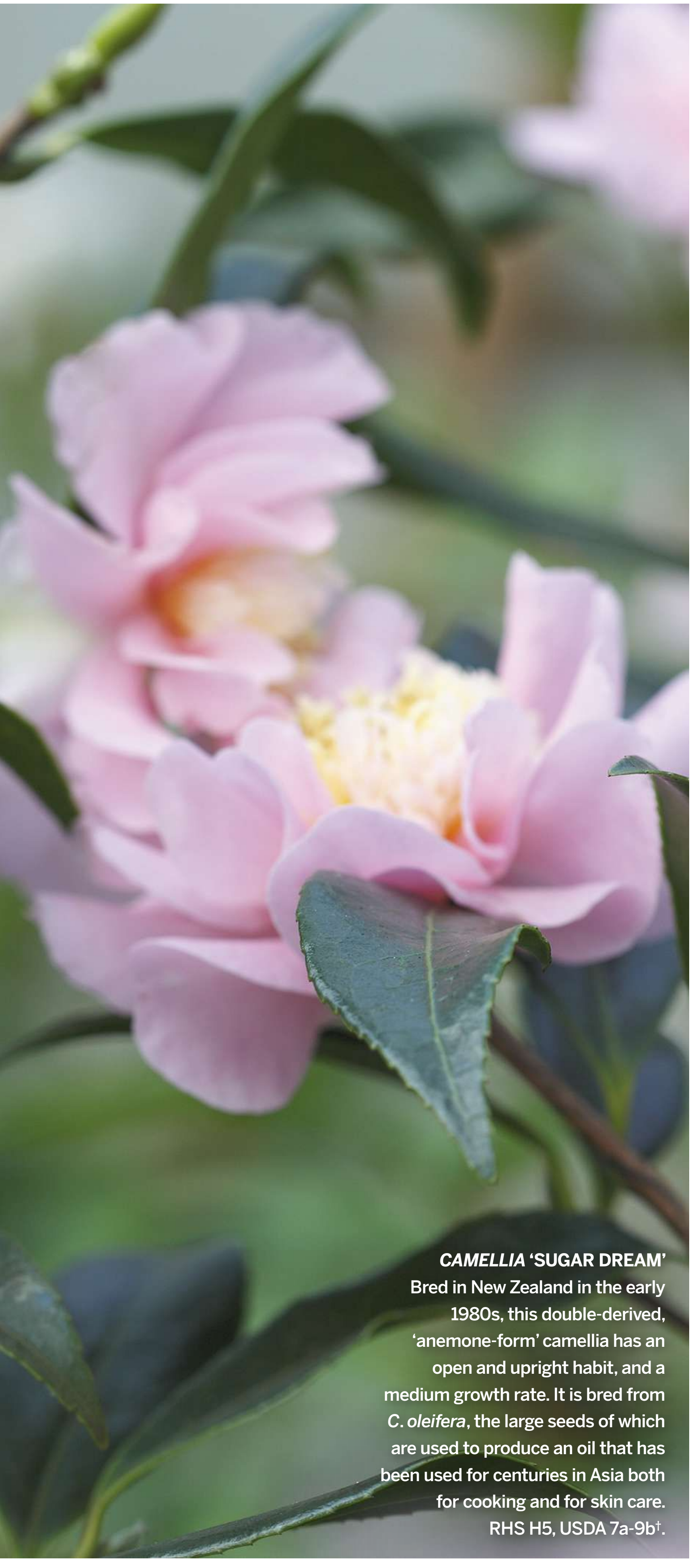
In brief

What Early flowering shrubs with elegant foliage and flowers in white, pink or red.
Origins China and Japan.
Season Autumn to winter.
Size Camellias grow best in the shade, and in the right conditions can potentially reach 5-6m, although 3m is more usual in cooler climates.
Conditions best in warm summer, mild winter climates, plus sheltered sites elsewhere.
Hardiness ratings Most have a rating of RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b. Some, often later-flowering plants, can survive lower temperatures.

Early flowering camellias

All camellias provide a vivid splash of colour when little else is in bloom, but some flower earlier than others and in the right place can be hardier than many people think

WORDS **NOËL KINGSBURY** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANNAÏCK GUITTENY**



***CAMELLIA* 'SUGAR DREAM'**
Bred in New Zealand in the early 1980s, this double-derived, 'anemone-form' camellia has an open and upright habit, and a medium growth rate. It is bred from *C. oleifera*, the large seeds of which are used to produce an oil that has been used for centuries in Asia both for cooking and for skin care. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b†.

Noël Kingsbury is a garden designer and writer whose garden on the Welsh borders reflects his passion for wild-style planting.

Camellias have that wonderful ability to remind us that warmer, sunnier days are on their way. While most species keep us waiting until late spring, some bloom almost indecently early, in early winter (or even autumn) when little else offers any colour. You'll find early flowering beauties among the more widely grown *C.* x *williamsii* and *C. japonica* types, including the richly coloured *Camellia japonica* 'Takanini' (see page 63), but these are the exceptions and many of the better known species and hybrids described as early flowering don't get going until early or even late winter – sometimes as the first flush of an extended flowering season.

The species most eager to show off its wares is *Camellia sasanqua*. Smaller-flowered and with darker, finer foliage than the bigger and blowsier japonicas, this is a species native to Japan, where camellia growing is deeply rooted in the gardening culture. *C. sasanqua* was first introduced into cultivation around 400 years ago, on the southern Japanese island of Kyushu where, during the Edo period (1603-1868), it was associated with the spiritual training of samurai warriors.

Sasquanas were particularly suited to Kyushu's warm climate and today they are mostly associated with the American South, which has a similar climate of mild winters and steamy summers. But they will flourish in cooler climates too if the right situation is chosen, and they can make good fast-growing hedges, to three metres high.

Sasanquas and the closely related species *C. hiemalis* and the hybrid *C.* x *vernalis*, are often referred to collectively as sasanqua camellias. These are the best known early flowerers, but there are also various others that perform early. One of the best is *C.* 'Cornish Snow', a hybrid of *C. cuspidata* and *C. saluenensis*. This vigorous grower has an open habit and from midwinter is smothered in small, white flowers that are ▷

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

▷ so irregularly shaped they would be instantly dismissed by a flower show judge, but make a welcome winter sight for gardeners. Another unusual cultivar worth looking out for is *C.* 'Snow Flurry', a pure-white cultivar of *C. oleifera* that flowers from early autumn onwards and can withstand temperatures as low as -15°C.

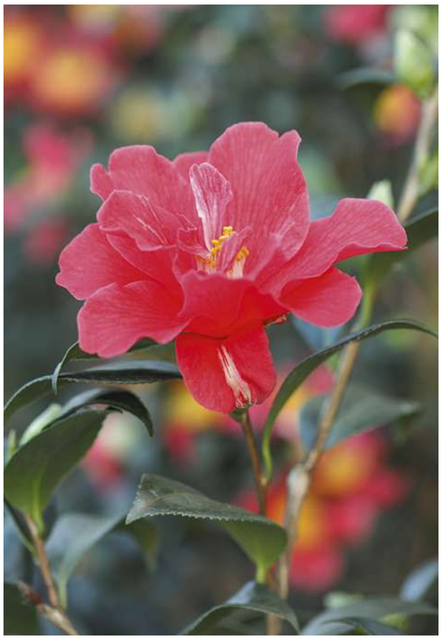
Autumn flowering camellias may show a similar colour range to spring flowering cultivars, but they tend to lack the clear forms of the classics. There are singles – such as the white-flowered *C. sasanqua* 'Narumigata' (see page 66) and the red-flowered *C.* x *vernalis* 'Yuletide'(see below right), which has a big central golden boss of stamens – that can look very stylish. The doubles, alas, have a slight touch of the bad hair day about them. But again, when they're flowering in November or December, who cares?

Another, possibly debatable, bonus of the sasanqua camellias is their scent. Their fragrance is not strong and is difficult to describe. Most people find it vaguely pleasant, and reminiscent of spring flowers; others disagree. Jennifer Trehane the owner of Trehane Nursery (now retired), and doyenne of British camellia growing, is firmly in the latter camp. "Fragrance!" she once exclaimed, correcting my description. "Don't you mean pong?"

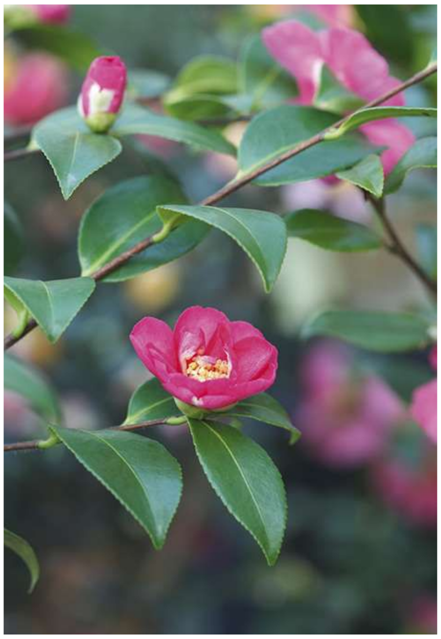
Fragrance aside, Jennifer is a big fan of sasanquas and thinks we should be more adventurous in growing these camellias, which are not as delicate as many people think. She once gave a cutting of one of the more vigorous cultivars – the single pink 'Hugh Evans' (see page 65) – to her daughter, who grew it in a container against the wall of her home in Sheffield. "It grew to two by three metres, and was in shade most of the day," remembers Jennifer. "The main thing was it was sheltered, no wind at all. And it was a warm house wall."

For less sheltered northern gardens it may be worth considering one of the British-bred, early flowering camellias, such as *C.* x *williamsii* 'Bow Bells' (see page 64). This small shrub may not flower until midwinter but it produces beautiful, semi-double, pink flowers until late spring and is more tolerant of the cold than many sasanquas. But like its Japanese cousins, it gives us a glimpse of summer's promise just when we need it most. □

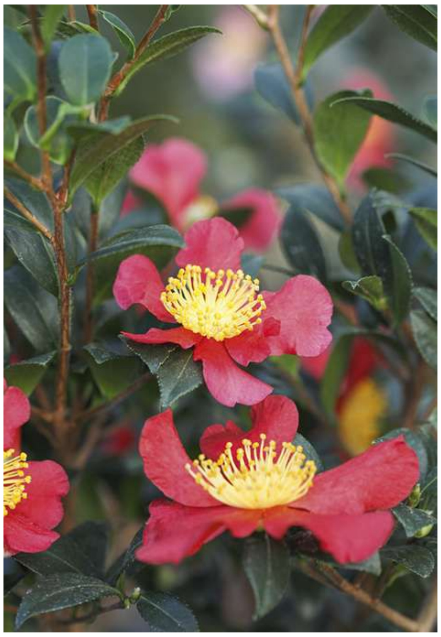
- Noël's recommendations for early flowering camellias continue over the next six pages.



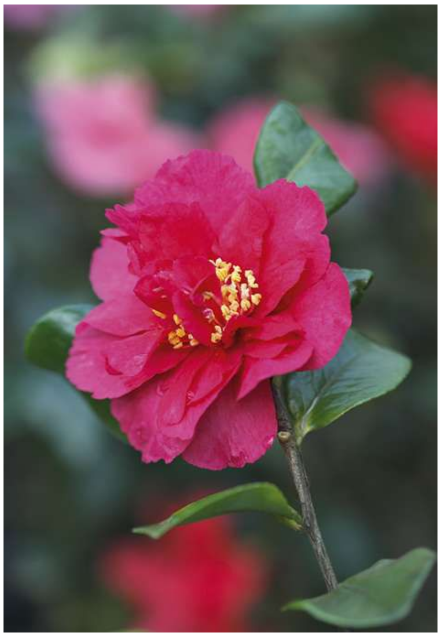
***CAMELLIA* 'FREEDOM BELL'**
Bred by Nuccio's Nurseries in California, this is a fast-growing cultivar that forms an upright, conical shape. Hardy and free-flowering in cool summer climate zones. AGM*. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.



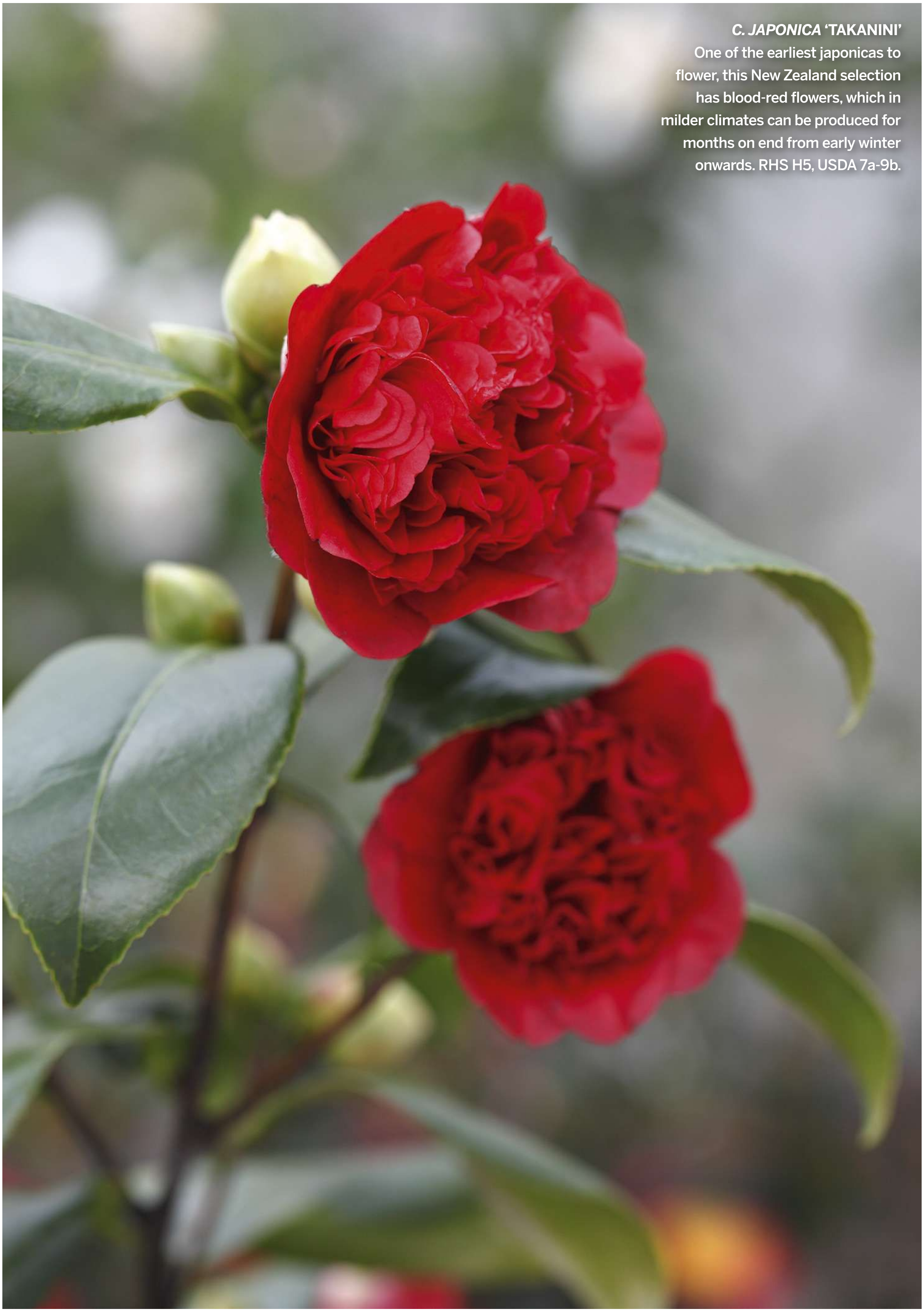
***C. HIEMALIS* 'KANJIRO'**
An old Japanese cultivar of sasanqua type with semi-double flowers produced in bush-smothering quantities over a long autumn to winter period. Vigorous growing, upright habit. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.



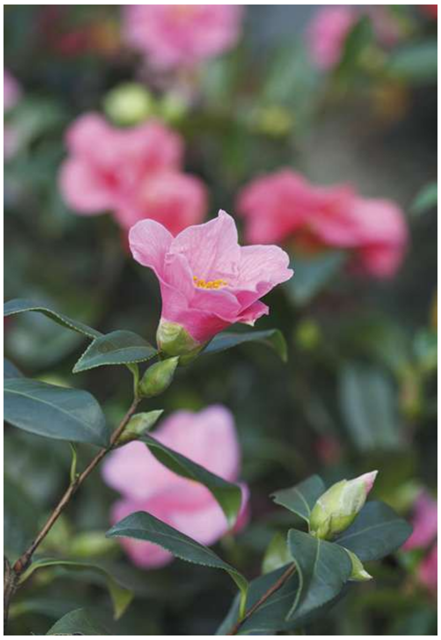
***CAMELLIA* X *VERNALIS* 'YULETIDE'**
This attractive cultivar with striking red flowers and glossy foliage was bred from a natural hybrid of *C. sasanqua* and *C. japonica* first recorded in 1630. It flowers in midwinter – hence the name. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.



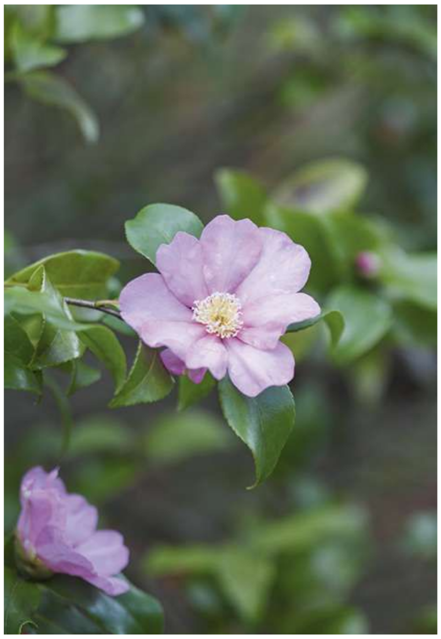
***C. HIEMALIS* 'BONANZA'**
Ruffled, semi-double flowers, 5-7cm across, are produced over a long season, starting in late autumn. This relatively upright cultivar is noted for it small, neat leaves. Medium growth rate.RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.



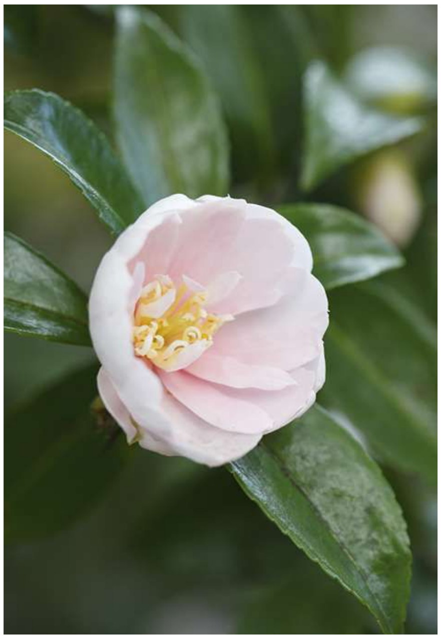
C. *JAPONICA* 'TAKANINI'
One of the earliest japonicas to flower, this New Zealand selection has blood-red flowers, which in milder climates can be produced for months on end from early winter onwards. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.



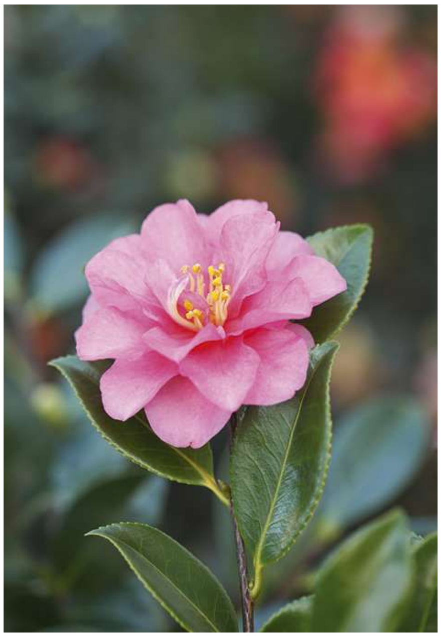
C. X *WILLIAMSII* 'BOW BELLS'
Notably hardy, early and long-flowering, this Dorset-bred selection of a strain originally produced in Cornwall is one of the best for northerly climates. Medium growth rate and upright, open habit. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.



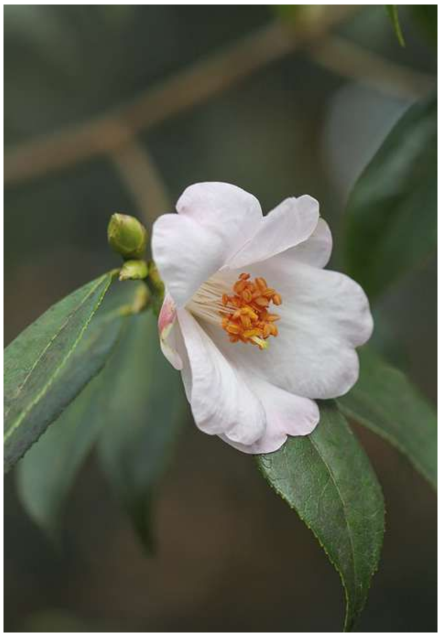
C. *SASANQUA* 'CLEOPATRA'
Semi-double but open flowers are produced throughout autumn or mild spells in winter. Vigorous grower but with a compact habit and therefore potentially a good hedging plant. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.



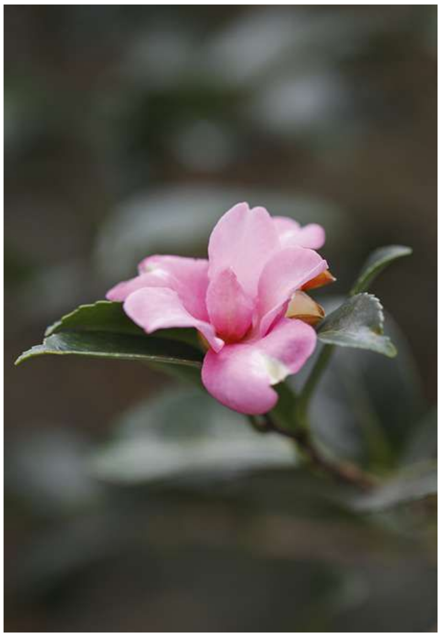
C. *SASANQUA* 'JEAN MAY'
A semi-double or fully double with wide (7cm), shell-pink flowers. A dependable old cultivar that has a medium growth rate and a compact, upright habit.
AGM. RHS H4, USDA 7a-10b.



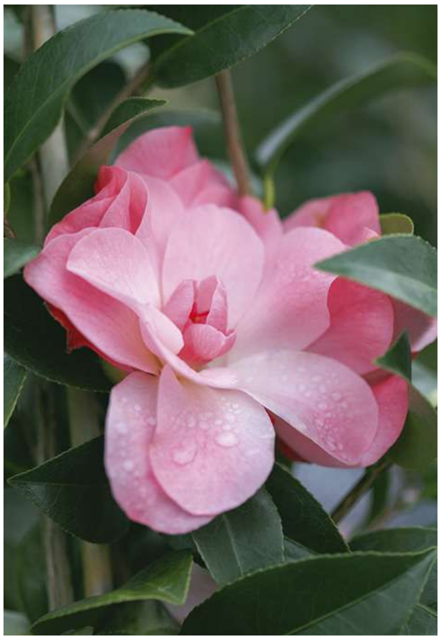
C. *HIEMALIS* 'SHISHIGASHIRA'
Originally from the Osaka area of Japan, this cultivar's name translates as 'lion's head' referring to the mane-like flowers. It is so slow and dense-growing as to be functionally a dwarf shrub. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.



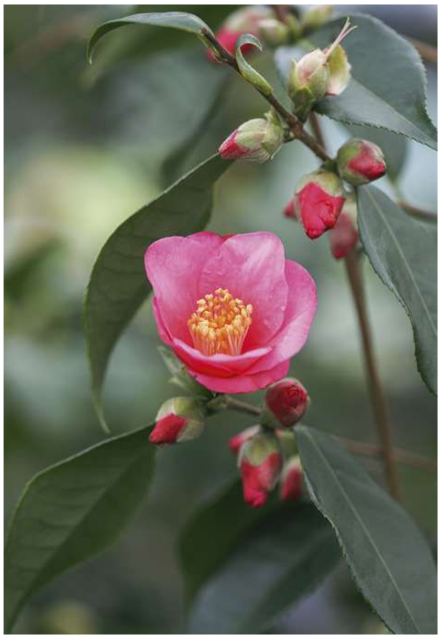
C. 'WINTON'
This hybrid between *C. cuspidata* and *C. saluenensis* has a long season of blush-pink flowers, relatively small leaves, and a vigorous, open and upright habit. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.



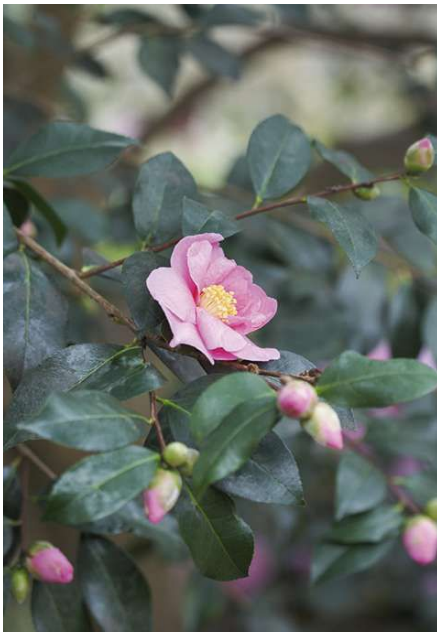
C. *SASANQUA* 'LUCINDA'
The flowers of this semi-double cultivar have an irregular petal formation, a distinct silvery sheen and last longer than most. It has a medium growth rate and a distinctly upright habit. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.



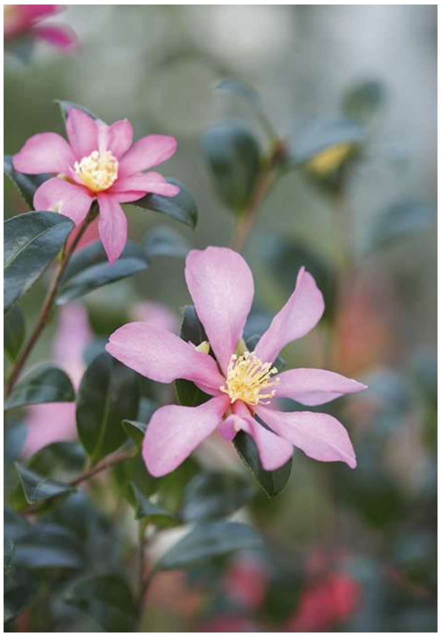
C. 'AUTUMN JEWEL'
The many petals are arranged so perfectly it counts as a 'formal double'; the flowers are produced over a long period and fall as a complete bloom. The growth habit is dense but spreading. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.



C. 'CRIMSON CANDLES'
Although the flowers are pink the pointed buds are dark red – hence the name. New foliage is bronzy-red, so this vigorous cultivar offers a long season of interest. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.



C. 'SHOW GIRL'
A *C. reticulata* x *C. sasanqua* hybrid that produces extra-large (9cm), semi-double pink flowers in late winter. Vigorous with dark-green leaves that are of a notably good quality. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 7a-9b.



C. *SASANQUA* 'HUGH EVANS'
A single cultivar, that flowers over a long season. It is vigorous with arching, loose branches, making it a good cultivar for growing as a wall shrub or as an espalier. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.

Cultivation

- Camellias are plants of mature forest understorey so they like humus-rich and moist but well-drained soil, preferably acidic, in light shade. Most early flowering camellias are from the almost sub-tropical regions of southern Japan and southeastern China. These areas get much stronger sun than northern Europe, so the plants are tolerant of full sun in northern latitudes as long as they never dry out. Sasanquas have a reputation for being more tolerant of drier or wetter soils than other camellias, and being more sun- tolerant; they like warmth, so a warm wall or west-facing slope is ideal.

- Camellias, even the sasanquas, are generally hardy in the UK; the main problem is protecting the buds from frost damage. The classic advice is to avoid planting them where the morning sun warms the chilled buds too quickly; shaded or west-facing situations are better. British summers may not be warm enough for a sasanqua's buds to form, and if they do, they may not survive a long winter. In the UK they are most successful in the south, or on warm walls where they can flower profusely.

- Like rhododendrons – to which camellias are not related but with which they have much in common ecologically – the root systems are shallow. This make them very good for growing in containers, so they are ideal for sheltered, urban gardens and courtyards. However, they must never be allowed to dry out and should be fed frequently.

- Pruning should be carried out immediately after flowering, leaving it until later risks removing flower buds on the new stems, although pinching out tips after the main spring growth spurt is over will do no harm. Out-of-control plants can be pruned hard as regeneration is good.

- Camellias, vary in their shape and growth rate. While most are tidy growers, those with leggier growth can be trained as a wall shrub or even an espalier against a sheltered wall. Tight, upright growers make good hedges, but flowering will be reduced. All camellias, are potentially small trees, six metres in height. How quickly they get there depends on climate; plants in regions with a long growing season, or warm summers and plentiful moisture will grow very much more quickly. In reality, two or three metres is the most that can usually be expected in the UK, so they can be treated as shrubs.

- Propagation is relatively easy from semi-ripe cuttings taken in early summer; so much so that camellias were grown as more or less disposable pot plants in the Victorian era.

- There are no particularly serious pest or disease problems.

Further information

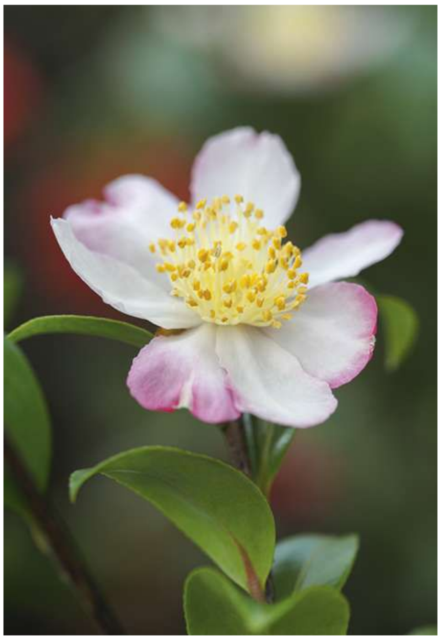
Camellias: The Complete Guide to Their Cultivation and Use by Jennifer Trehane (Timber Press, 1998).

The International Camellia Society
internationalcamellia.org

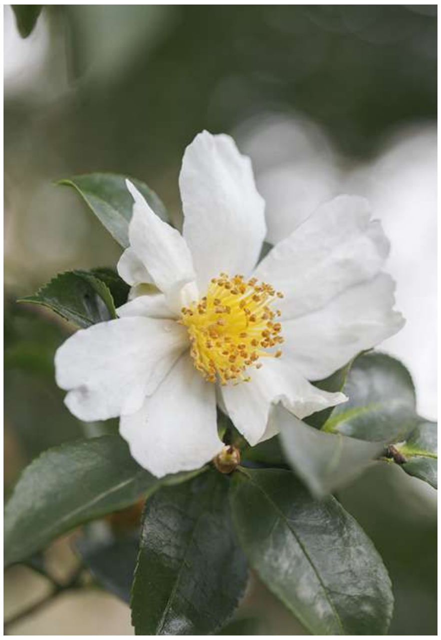
Where to buy

- **Loder Plants**
  Market Garden, Cyder Farm, Lower
  Beeding, Horsham,
  West Sussex RH13 6PP.
  Tel 01403 891412,
  rhododendrons.com
- **Nuccio's Nurseries**
  3555 Chantey Trail, Altadena,
  CA 91001, USA.
  Tel +1 626 794 3383,
  nucciosnurseries.com
- **Trehane Nursery**
  Stapehill Road, Wimborne,
  Dorset BH21 7ND.
  Tel 01202 873490,
  trehane.co.uk

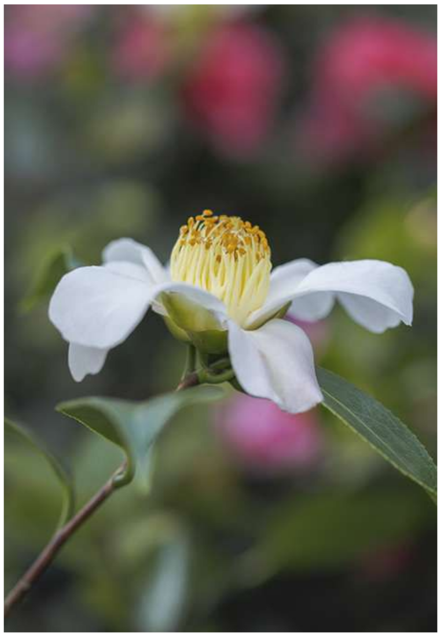
READER EVENT
Don't miss author Noël Kingsbury's talk at the *Gardens Illustrated* Festival. For details and how to book see page 9 or go to **gardensfestival.com**



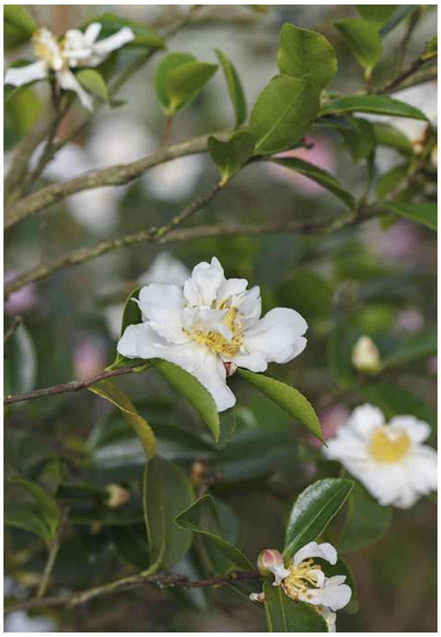
C. SASANQUA **'MOMOZONO-NISHIKI'**
Pale pink, but with a much darker border that creates a striking appearance on this cultivar, which was introduced from Japan in the late 19th century. It has an upright but open habit. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.



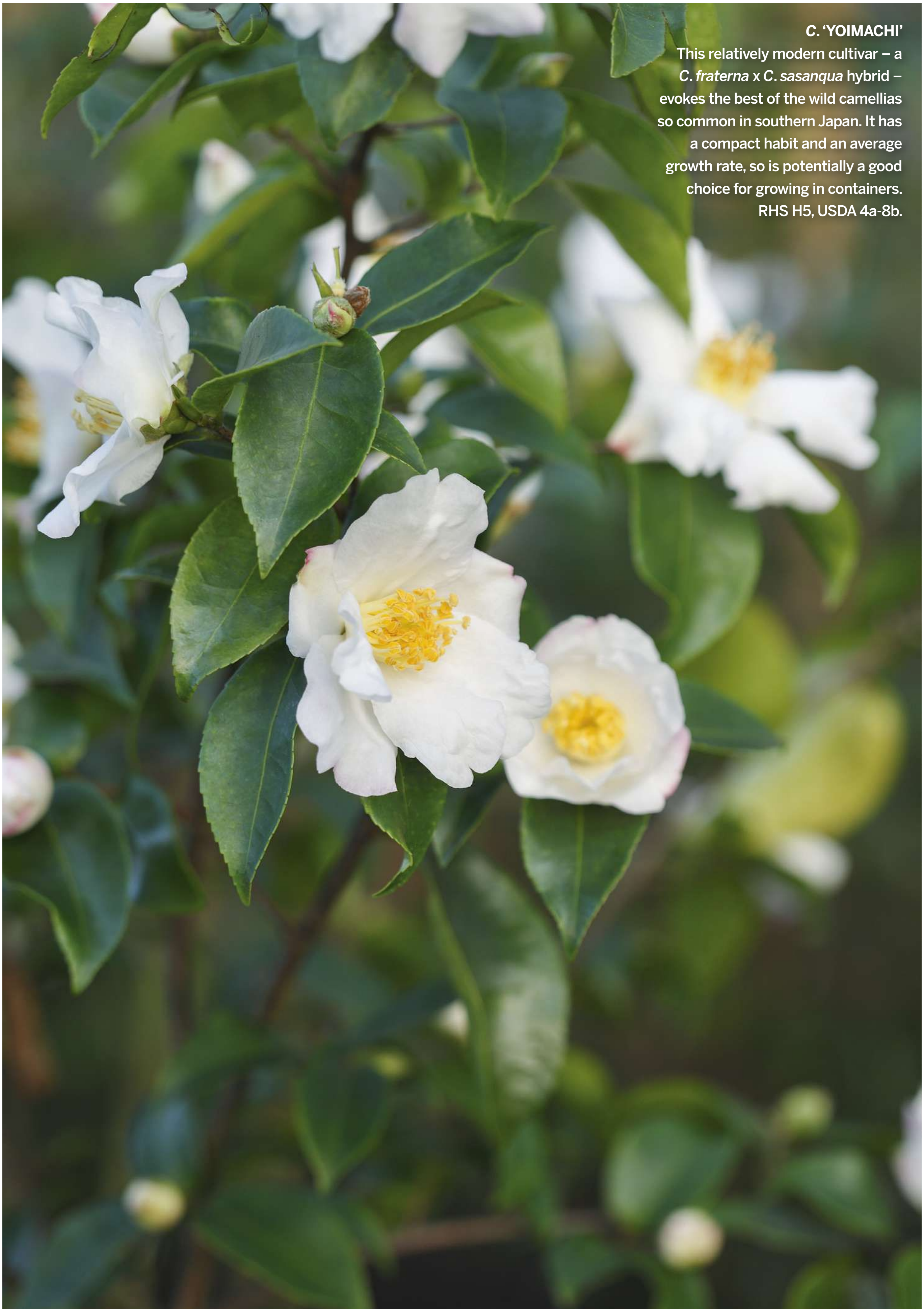
C. SASANQUA **'NARUMIGATA'**
An old cultivar, introduced from Japan in 1896. It produces masses of flower, which perhaps accounts for reports of particularly strong fragrance drifting around the plants. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 7a-9b.



C. JAPONICA **'APPLE BLOSSOM'**
Large (7-10cm) and very profuse flowers in pale pink, fading to white in early spring. Growth is vigorous and dense, making this potentially a good screening or hedging plant. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.

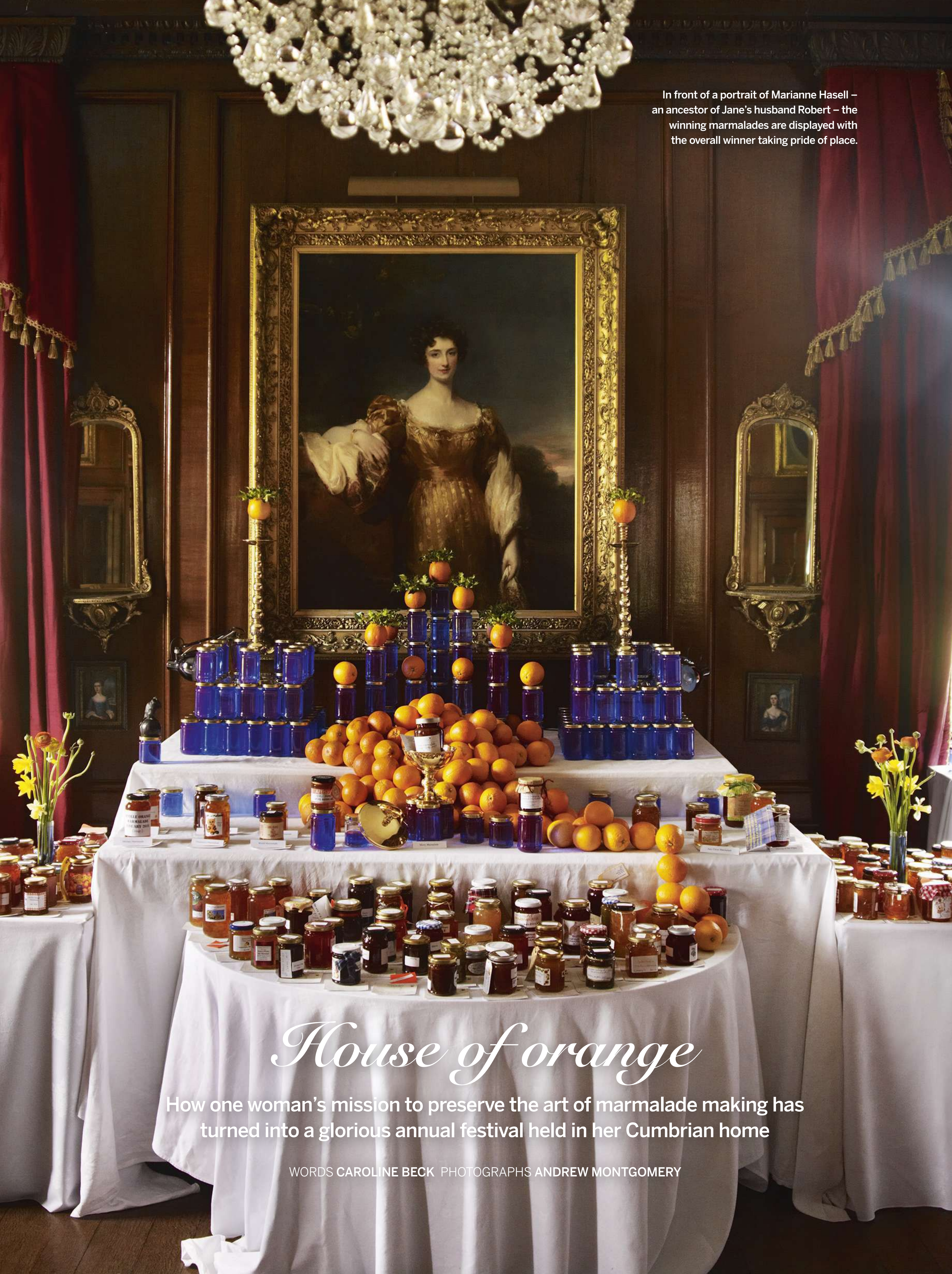


C. SASANQUA **'GAY SUE'**
The white anemone-form blooms of this vigorous and upright shrub have a creamy centre and emerge from pink-tipped buds from October. Has a musky fragrance. RHS H5, USDA 7a-9b.



C. 'YOIMACHI'
This relatively modern cultivar – a *C. fraterna* x *C. sasanqua* hybrid – evokes the best of the wild camellias so common in southern Japan. It has a compact habit and an average growth rate, so is potentially a good choice for growing in containers. RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.

MANY THANKS TO JENNIFER TREHANE, TREHANE NURSERY AND RHS WISLEY WHERE THESE IMAGES WERE TAKEN.



In front of a portrait of Marianne Hasell – an ancestor of Jane's husband Robert – the winning marmalades are displayed with the overall winner taking pride of place.

House of orange

How one woman's mission to preserve the art of marmalade making has turned into a glorious annual festival held in her Cumbrian home

WORDS **CAROLINE BECK** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**

DALEMAIN
This bag could contain a year's supply of DALEMAIN Marmalade

Left Baker and chef Dan Lepard announces the 2016 winners with, from left to right, Martin Grant, owner of Mackays of Dundee, Jo Aldhouse, whose Nina Orange Marmalade was the overall Homemade winner in 2016, Jane Hasell-McCosh and Stephen Bellamy James QC, Master of the Worshipful Company of Fruiterers

Below Jars of marmalade ready for tasting, give the state rooms at Dalemain an orange glow.

Bottom The annual festival now welcomes visitors and competitors from around the world.

In the short days of winter the sight of the first Seville oranges arriving in the shops means one thing – the ritual of marmalade making, the shredded bitter peel transformed by sugar and heat into something delicious. Marmalade, until recently, was old school, elbowed off the breakfast table by pastries containing sexy exotics, such as almonds, apricots and dark chocolate. Meanwhile, Spanish orchards growing Seville oranges were being grubbed up for watermelon fields. But a quest bordering on obsession by a Cumbrian gardener, cook and historian is reviving its status, propelling it from the back of the cupboard to the shelves of luxury delicatessens.

Marmalade has a surprisingly long association with this country. It was originally made with quinces (the Portuguese word for quince is *marmelo*), until Arab traders brought Seville oranges to Europe in medieval times. One of the earliest English recipes dates from 1587, and the Georgians were crazy for it, serving it as a pudding, a confectionary and even a digestif. Then in the 20th century mass-produced blandness saw its popularity decline.

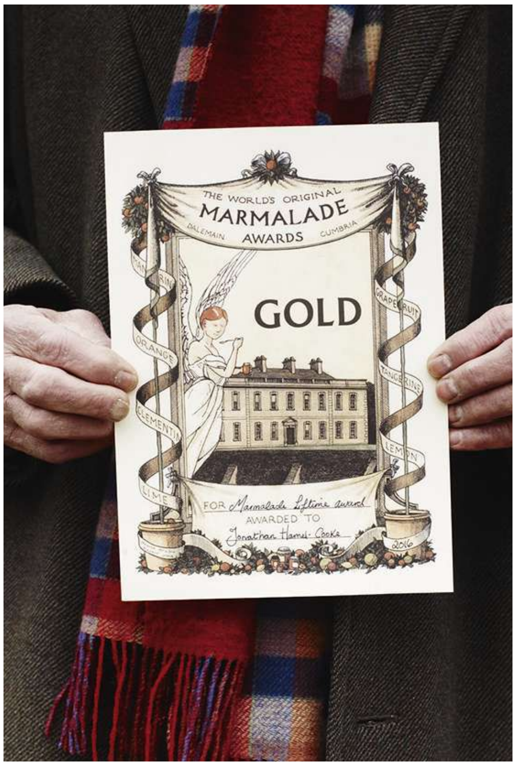
But in the past decade, marmalade has been raised from unfashionable obscurity to tart cult-status by a handful of devotees, not least Jane Hasell-McCosh of Dalemain House in Cumbria. Jane, a talented gardener who grows citrus fruits in her glasshouse, found her interest in marmalade ▷

DALEMAIN
MARMALADE
FESTIVAL

Right The impressive Georgian front to Dalemain House in Cumbria dates back to 1744.

Below A proud 2016 winner shows off his Gold Certificate. The Marmalade Lifetime award is judged on how long someone has been making marmalade and the story behind their marmalade making.

Below right For her first festival Jane coaxed many of her friends into making jars of marmalade and many continue to support the festival – often sporting at least one item of orange clothing.



▷ piqued when she discovered hand-written marmalade recipes by the women of the house dating back over 300 years in the family archives. In 2005 she had the unlikely idea of holding a marmalade festival. She got 60 entries for that first festival. Last March she had more than 3,000 entrants from across the world. “When I started, marmalade was on the decline, no one really could remember it, and most people had given up on it. We’ve re-awakened the fun by reviving old recipes.” She has gone further than this, building relationships with artisan growers and one in particular, Dora Gahona Fraga, who at almost 80 protects ancient Seville organic orange orchards by renting then replanting them, or saving them from destruction.

To walk into the hushed state rooms of Dalemain, where the late winter light makes the thousands of assembled marmalade jars glow, is like entering a cross between a Roald Dahl story and a Victorian Museum of Curiosities. Each jar is tasted, judged, commented upon in handwritten notes, and awarded prizes. One of the judges, Doreen Cameron, is a local hill farmer as well as a seasoned Women’s Institute judge who tastes, on average, around a thousand of the marmalades. “I’m looking for presentation. Whether the label’s on straight, is it filled right up to the top, otherwise it’ll go mouldy.” Colour, consistency of set and texture of peel are all scrutinised. “Many aren’t cooked enough because when you add the sugar it sets the peel immediately. You can cook it all day after that and it’ll never get any softer.” On the subject of additions to a standard orange marmalade, Doreen is candid. “Some people go mad and put all sorts in there. One had tea, another rosemary sprigs, I had a jar with Scotch bonnet chillies and even a gin and tonic marmalade.” As I ▷

Marmalade recipes

Recipes for marmalade have changed surprisingly little over the centuries, and as long as you get the fruit-to-sugar ratio right, you can experiment with different ingredients.

Basic marmalade recipe

Makes 5 to 6 x 450g jars

- 1kg Seville oranges
- 75ml lemon juice
- 2kg demerara sugar

Scrub the oranges well, cut in half, squeeze out the juice and keep to one side. Using a sharp knife, remove the skin, discarding the white pith, then slice into strips depending on preference of 'cut'. Put sliced peel, juice and 2.5 litres of water in a bowl and leave to soak overnight. Transfer mixture to preserving pan and bring to the boil. Simmer slowly, until the mixture has reduced by about a third and the peel is tender – this takes up to two hours and don't be tempted to rush it, otherwise your marmalade will be like leather. Stir in the lemon juice and sugar, boil rapidly until the sugar has dissolved and continue on a rolling boil until the setting point* is reached (20-30 minutes). Remove from boil and allow to cool for 15 minutes. Stir to disperse any scum and pour into clean, sterilised jars and seal immediately. It will last for up to two years.

Orchard Fruit Marmalade

Use the same method and ratio of fruit, sugar and water as above (omitting the lemon juice) but replace oranges with mixture of windfall apples (Jane uses 'Peasgood's Nonsuch') plus juice and peel of one grapefruit and lemon, and a little brandy (stirred in at the end of the cooking process).

Kitchen Garden Marmalade

This is one of Jane's own recipes, and is based on the recipe from the 1850s by one of her husband Robert's ancestors, Dorothea Hasell, which Jane found in the Dalemain archives. It uses the same method and ratio of fruit, sugar and water as above (omitting the lemon juice) but with the 1kg of fruit made up of Seville oranges, rhubarb, one grapefruit and one lemon.

*The setting point is the point at which the marmalade will keep its consistency. The easiest way to test this is to put a small saucer in the freezer, and when you think the marmalade is set, take it off the boil and put a spoonful on to the cold saucer. After a second or two, push it with your finger and if it crinkles, it's set; if not, then return to the boil and keep testing every five minutes until the setting point is reached.

A selection of just some of thousands of entries line up in one of Dalemain's grand state rooms in readiness for the judges' assessment.

FOOD
MARMALADE SHOP
ARTISAN MARMALADE TASTING
HOT FOOD - INDOOR SEATING

Above Visitors to the Marmalade Festival are serenaded by local musicians in the stable courtyard.

Left Atsuko Hayashi from Tokyo, winner, for the second year running in 2016, of the 'Any Citrus Marmalade' category shows off her daidai and yuzu marmalade.

Right The Festival has more than 20 different categories – including one for campanologists – for amateurs, artisan producers and caterers. Last year's overall Homemade winner was Jo Aldhouse's Nina Orange Marmalade with single malt whisky, which also won the Merry Marmalade category –the only amateur category that allows alcohol.

▷ walk round the rooms, I see one card next to a jar which says, in exasperated capitals: 'THE TASTE OF MUSTARD IS OVERPOWERING.'

The winner of the 2016 Man-Made category, Reuben Cooperman, has travelled all the way from Perth, Western Australia. "My wife Deborah grows the Sevilles in our yard and I make the marmalade. We wrapped it like crazy in bubble-wrap, kissed it goodbye and hoped for the best. We heard a couple of weeks ago we'd won and only booked our flights this week." Another winner, Atsuko Hayashi from Tokyo, radiant in an exotic-looking kimono, has won gold awards two years running for her marmalade made from the Japanese citrus fruits daidai and yuzu. Each year the overall amateur winner has their marmalade recipe adopted and sold by Fortnum & Mason. Competition is fierce and recipes jealously guarded proving that marmalade is no longer the preserve of your grandmother's breakfast table. □

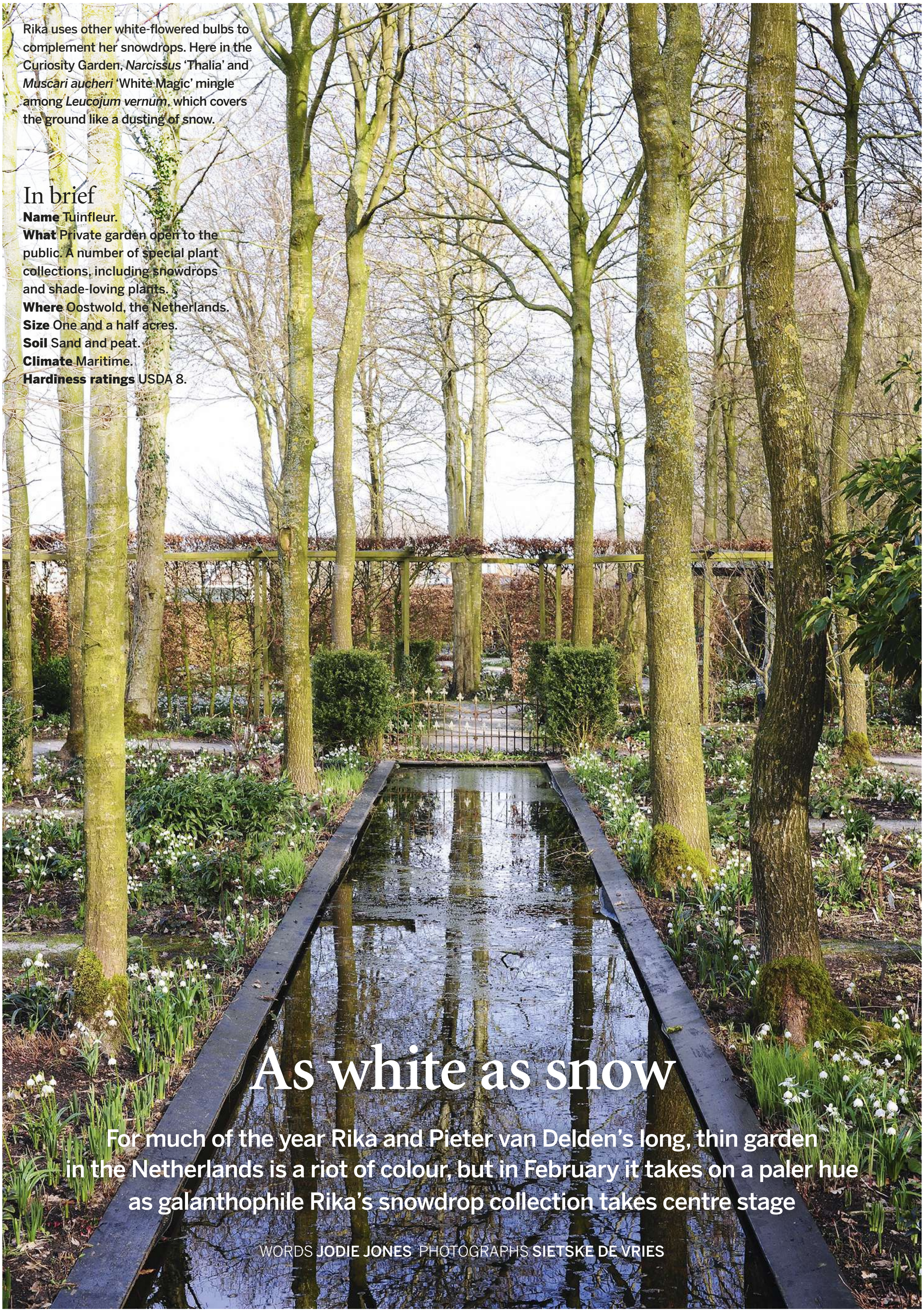
USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Dalemain House & Gardens, Penrith, Cumbria CA11 0HB.
Tel 017684 86450. **Website** dalemain.com
Open Garden: 5 February – 26 October, 10am-4.30pm. House: 9 April – 26 October, 10.30am-3.30pm. Admission £11.50 for house and garden, £8.50 garden only.
The 2017 Dalemain Festival takes place on 18-19 March, and the deadline for entries is 10 February 2017. For more information visit dalemainmarmaladeawards.co.uk

Care of orange trees

- Oranges need year-round warmth (at least 5°C), light and good ventilation. In summer, they can stay outside in a sheltered, sunny spot.
- Compost must be moist but well-drained all summer, but on the dry side in winter. Indoor plants can get red spider mite and scale insect damage but this usually disappears when they go outside.
- Trees need weekly feeding (March to September) with either a proprietary citrus-fruit feed, some liquid tomato feed or seaweed solution.
- Restrict young trees to about three or four fruit each season, but mature ones can happily fruit away.
- Trees grow relatively slowly and will need re-potting once the roots reach the bottom of the existing pot and transplanted, usually in March, with fresh compost and a top-dressing of fertiliser.
- A good tree for beginners is *Citrus* x *microcarpa* or calamondin orange. It's small, nearly always in flower, and produces bitter fruit that make good marmalade.

Jo's Jam
orange marmalade
Talisker single malt
Merry Marmalade



Rika uses other white-flowered bulbs to complement her snowdrops. Here in the Curiosity Garden, *Narcissus* 'Thalia' and *Muscari aucheri* 'White Magic' mingle among *Leucojum vernum*, which covers the ground like a dusting of snow.

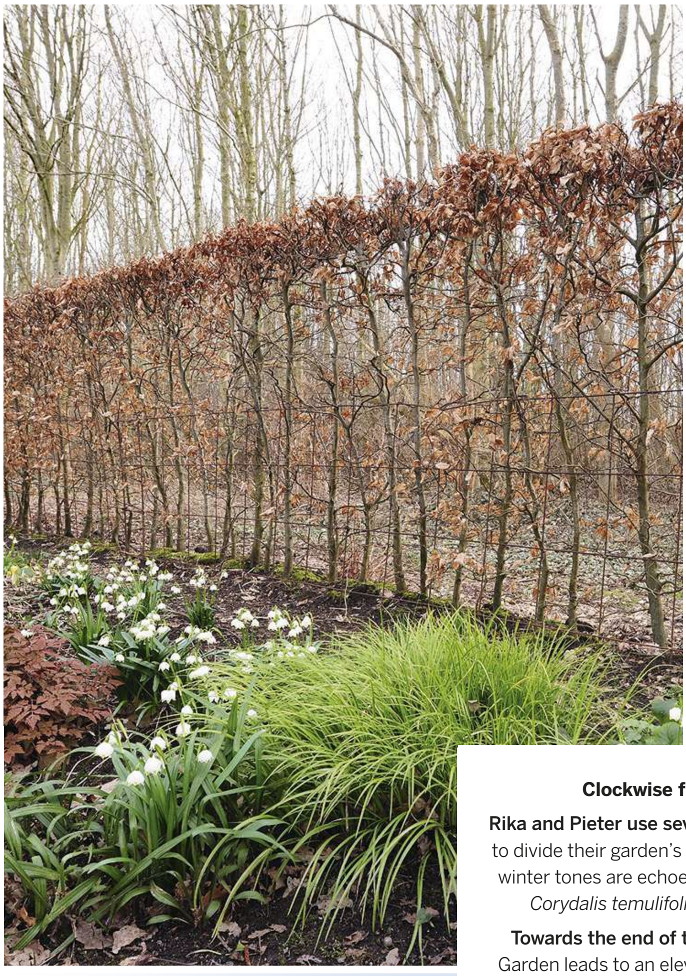
In brief

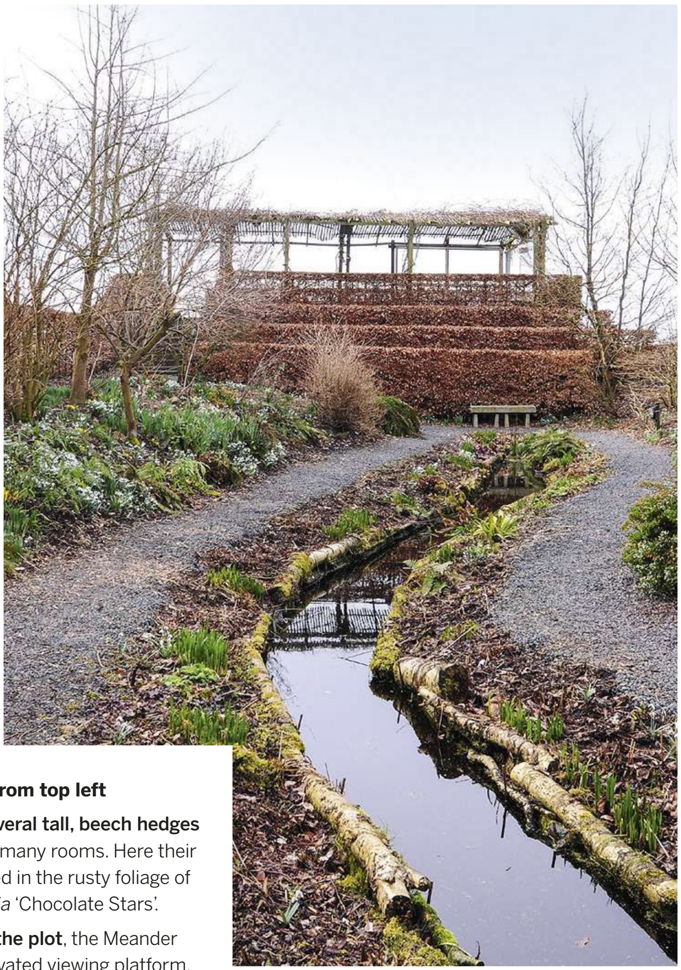
Name Tuinfleur.
What Private garden open to the public. A number of special plant collections, including snowdrops and shade-loving plants.
Where Oostwold, the Netherlands.
Size One and a half acres.
Soil Sand and peat.
Climate Maritime.
Hardiness ratings USDA 8.

As white as snow

For much of the year Rika and Pieter van Delden's long, thin garden in the Netherlands is a riot of colour, but in February it takes on a paler hue as galanthophile Rika's snowdrop collection takes centre stage

WORDS **JODIE JONES** PHOTOGRAPHS **SIETSKE DE VRIES**





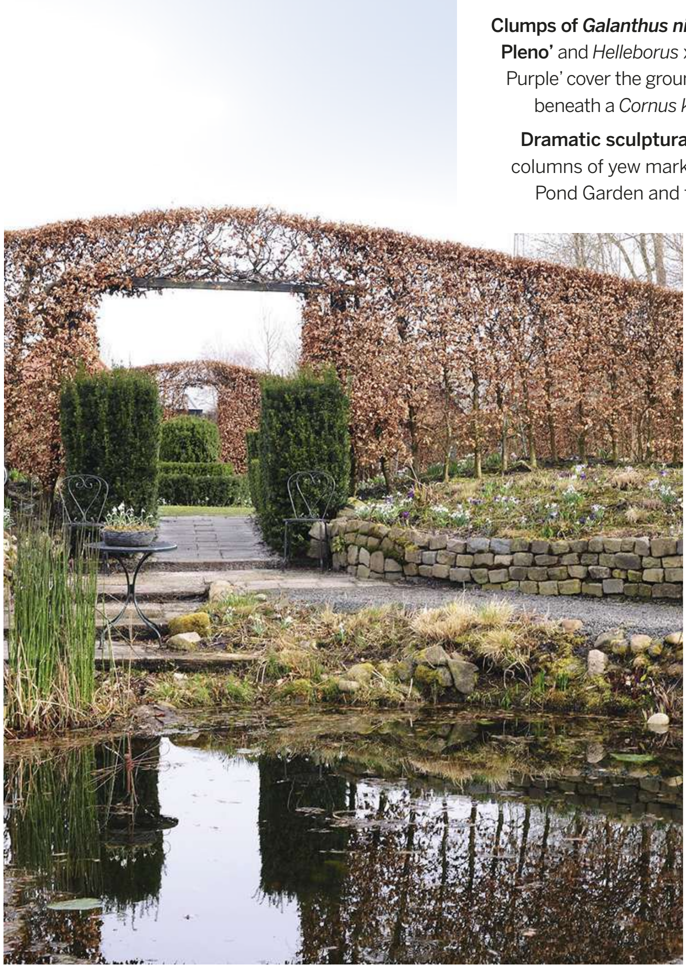
Clockwise from top left

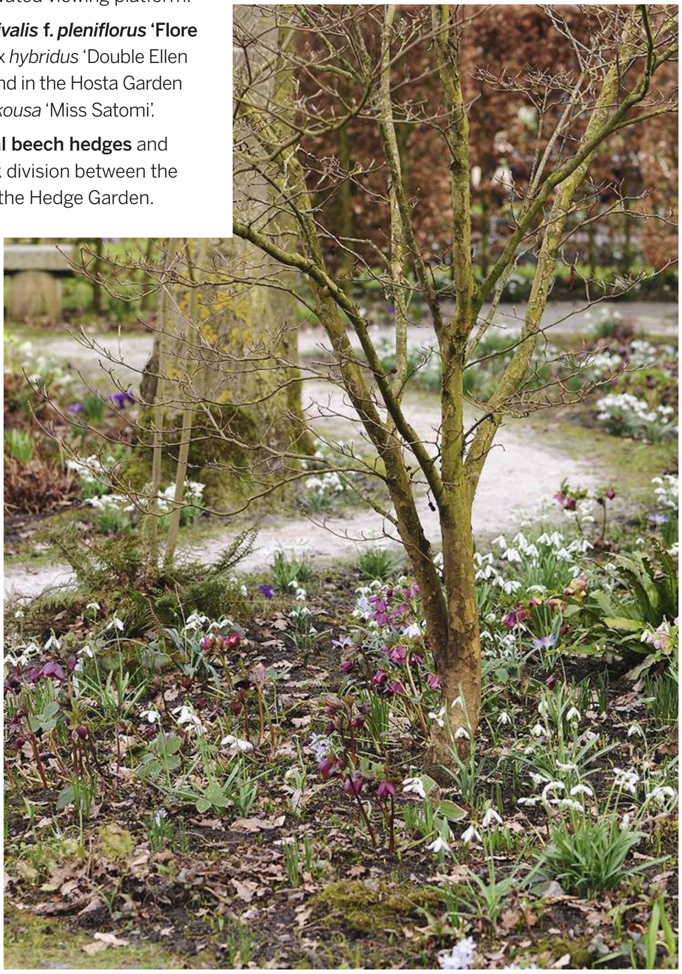
Rika and Pieter use several tall, beech hedges to divide their garden's many rooms. Here their winter tones are echoed in the rusty foliage of *Corydalis temulifolia* 'Chocolate Stars'.

Towards the end of the plot, the Meander Garden leads to an elevated viewing platform.

Clumps of *Galanthus nivalis* f. *pleniflorus* 'Flore Pleno' and *Helleborus* x *hybridus* 'Double Ellen Purple' cover the ground in the Hosta Garden beneath a *Cornus kousa* 'Miss Satomi'.

Dramatic sculptural beech hedges and columns of yew mark division between the Pond Garden and the Hedge Garden.





Rika in her garden.

The galanthophile's guide to growing snowdrops

- **Common snowdrops**, such as *Galanthus nivalis* and *Galanthus elwesii*, look wonderful grown in big, naturalised clumps in moist, partly shaded sites, but will succumb to disease if they become too congested. Rika suggests dividing them every three years.
- **Rika prefers to grow snowdrops on their own**, but she has combined the distinctive cultivars *Galanthus* 'Dionysus' and *Galanthus nivalis* 'Viridapice' in pretty border combinations with cyclamen, crocus and ranunculus.
- **After the snowdrops have finished flowering**, she recommends feeding plants with liquid tomato feed once or twice, then leaving them to die down naturally.
- **Choice snowdrops need special care** and should not be displayed in small pots, which will get too hot and dry. Rika grows hers in baskets sunk into raised beds where she can control conditions. In summer she lifts these and checks if the bulbs are becoming congested. These are divided if need be, then replanted in multi-purpose compost mixed with sharp sand.
- **Rika prefers buying freshly lifted bulbs** (in the green), not dry stock, which may not regrow. Rare and expensive snowdrops should only be bought from a respected grower, see page 79 for suggestions.
- **Buy a good *Galanthus* monograph**. Rika recommends *Snowdrops: A Monograph of Cultivated Galanthus* by Matt Bishop, Aaron Davis and John Grimshaw (Griffin Press, 2006), which she calls 'the bible'.

In a cul-de-sac of small houses, all with neatly kept front gardens, one stands out from its neighbours. The front garden is gravelled and divided into modernist beds of clipped copper beech, like a miniature Mien Ruys landscape, and in the window is an enormous picture of a snowdrop.

This is the home of Rika and Pieter van Delden, and over the past 25 years the couple have created a garden that draws visitors from all over the Netherlands, and indeed the world. It is only 15 metres wide, but stretches for 300 metres away behind the house and is divided by more than three kilometres of immaculately clipped hedging into a series of 12 distinct garden rooms, each one leading off the previous room.

The hedges are Pieter's particular project. He maintains them alone, and entirely by eye, trimming beech, yew and box into sculptural shapes that are graphic ornaments as well as practical room dividers.

The rest of the land is Rika's domain and she takes the greatest joy in filling it with plants. She has a magpie instinct to collect, and has built up specialist selections of many plant groups, including hostas and pelargoniums. But she has a particular passion for bulbs of all types (she plants 20,000 new bulbs every year, and her hands bear the scars to prove it), and at this time of year it is snowdrops that are her pride and joy.

There are swathes of nodding white flowers in every part of the garden. Big clumps of *Galanthus elwesii*, *Galanthus nivalis* and the fragrant double *Galanthus nivalis* f. *pleniflorus* 'Flore Pleno' spread over the banks by a large pond. More snowdrops sprinkle the base of every hedge like a dusting of snow, and twine in a sinuous river between clumps of ornamental grasses desiccated by the winter cold.

It is all very beautiful on a crisp, late-winter morning, but this is not the show that attracts galanthophiles by the coach load. In a hidden area of the garden, where visitors are allowed only by invitation, Rika keeps the jewels of her snowdrop collection.

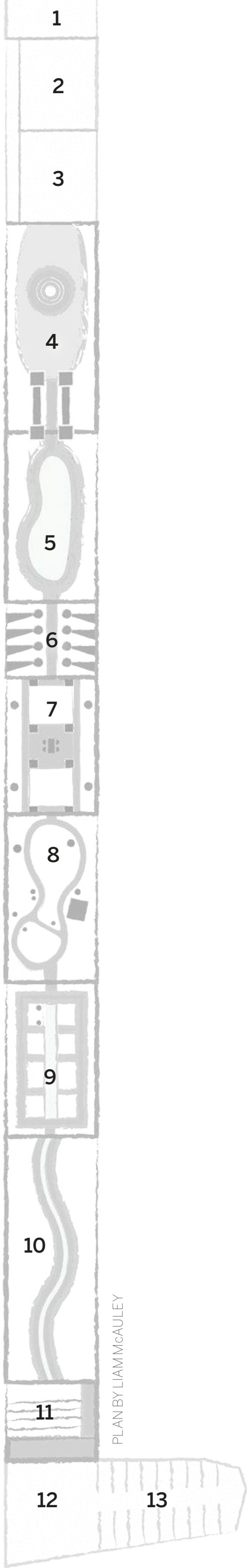
After a devastating attack of narcissus flya destroyed 60 choice cultivars in a single winter, these rarities are now kept in raised beds, built by Pieter, with netted covers to provide maximum protection. "We call them the rabbit hutches," says Rika. "They may not be beautiful but so far they have worked perfectly and, since they are raised off the ground, it is much easier for people to get up close and appreciate the details of each cultivar."

She doesn't breed her own new cultivars because, she says, she doesn't have the patience, although given the size and year-round complexity of her garden, the main reason must surely be lack of time. Nevertheless, she clearly loves being at the heart of this expert group of enthusiasts, which is why this year, yet again, she will be donning her special snowdrop hat (knitted by a fellow enthusiast), and preparing to lift the lid on her very special collection. ☐

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Nieuweweg 34, 9682 RM Oostwold, the Netherlands.
Tel +31 (0)597 551383. **Website** tuinfleur.nl
Open Every Sunday from 26 February to 1 October, 11am-5pm, and on other days by appointment. See website for details.

Turn the page for 12 of Rika's favourite snowdrops ▷



PLAN BY LIAM McAULEY

1 House
2 White Garden
3 Red Garden
4 Flower Garden
5 Pond Garden
6 Hedge Garden
7 Sculpture Garden
8 Hosta garden
9 Curiosity Garden
10 Meander Garden
11 Hill
12 Shaped Hedges
13 Wavy Hedges

Clockwise from top left

Mass plantings of *Galanthus nivalis* surround an open-sided summerhouse in the Hosta Garden.

A ribbon of water winds through the largest room, the Meander Garden, brightening the scene with a flash of reflected sky.

On one of the Meander Garden's steep banks, common snowdrops push up between *Asplenium scolopendrium*, with its strappy upright fronds, and the prolific copper shield fern *Dryopteris erythrosora* var. *prolifica*.

Rika collects all sorts of snowdrop ephemera, and displays some, such as these plant supports, in the Sculpture Garden.

12 of Rika's favourite snowdrops

1 *Galanthus* 'Lovely Rika'
Rika does not breed snowdrops herself, but this one was named for her by fellow galanthophile Jan Wierenga, after she became captivated by its pretty upturned flowers. 15cm.

2 *G. plicatus* 'Augustus'
A sturdy and reliable cultivar with large flowers and broader than usual leaves. It was named after renowned plantsman EA (Edward Augustus) Bowles. 15cm. RHS H5†.

3 *G. elwesii* var. *elwesii* 'Big Boy'
This aptly named cultivar is generally regarded as the largest of all the snowdrops. Although the plant as a whole rarely exceeds 20cm, its individual flowers are often more than 4cm long. 20cm.

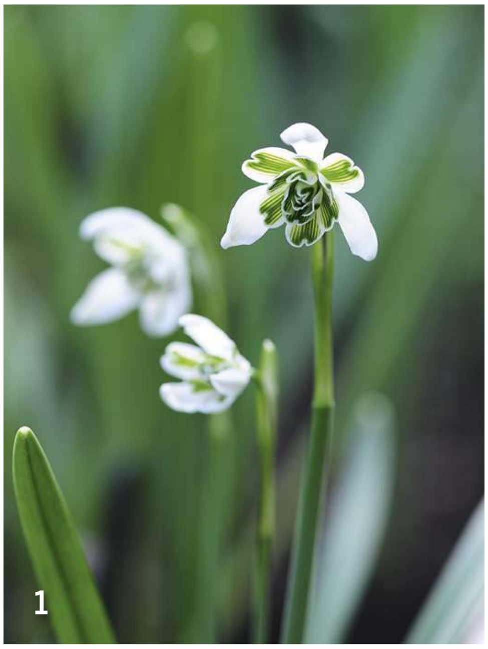
4 *G.* 'Cordelia'
When established, it falls among the taller members of the Greatorex doubles, but after dividing it is shorter. The inner segment marking consists of a fairly normal if rather square U, that distinctively stains upwards from the sides. 30cm.

5 *G. nivalis* f. *pleniflorus* 'Walrus'
Named for its slender outer segments, which extend like great tusks beyond the frilled and green-tipped inner segments. This is slow to establish and therefore tends to be expensive. 30cm.

6 *G.* 'Spindlestone Surprise'
One of the best yellow snowdrops. In its first few seasons the colour will tend towards lime green, but once established it will produce white flowers with clear, pure-yellow markings. 20cm.

7 *G.* 'Cowhouse Green'
Elegant, tall, single snowdrop combining green markings with a delicate wash of diffuse pale green at the base of the inner petals. 20cm.

8 *G. elwesii* 'Grumpy'
Look closely and you will clearly see the markings like a down-turned mouth and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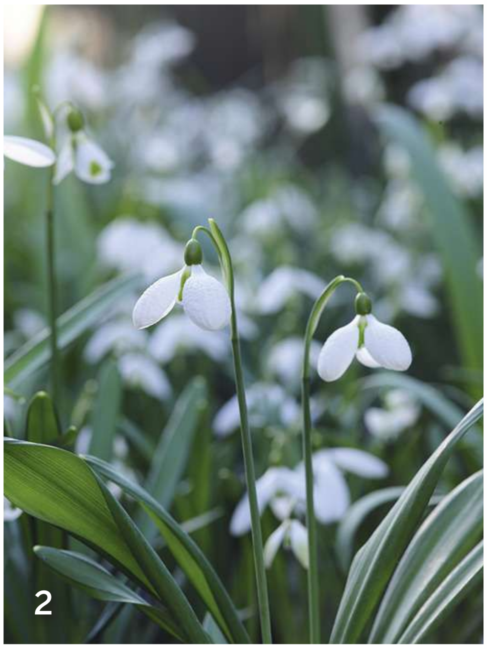
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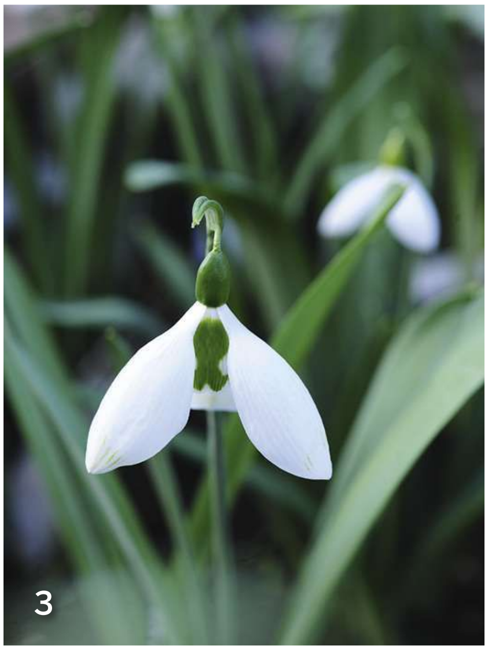
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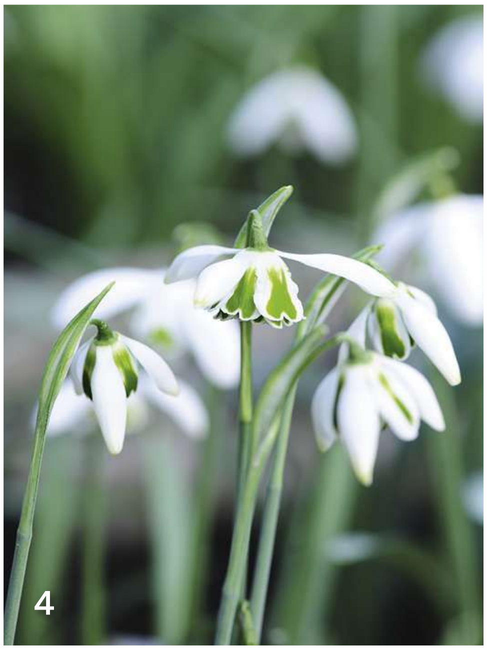
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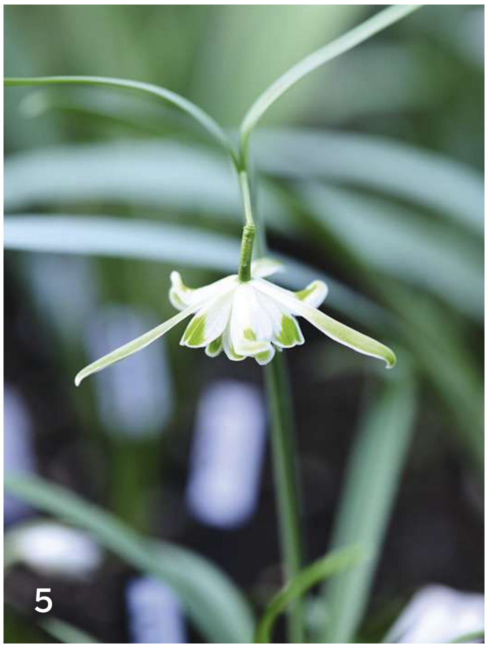
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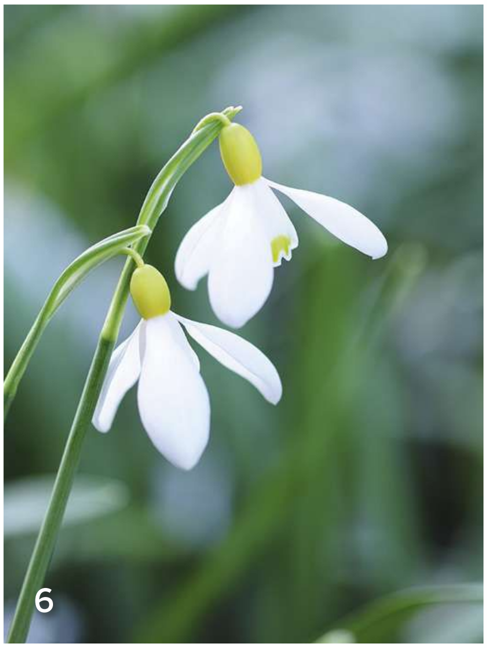
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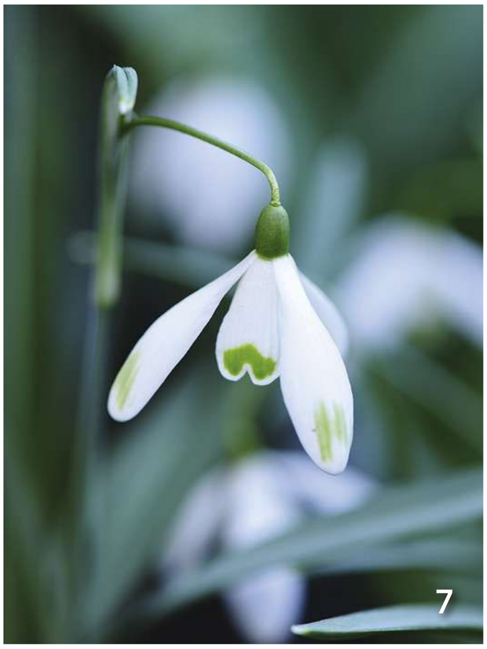
†Hardiness ratings given where available.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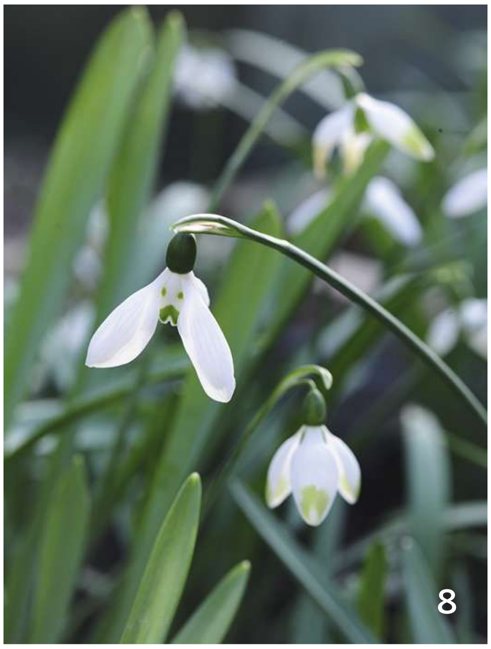
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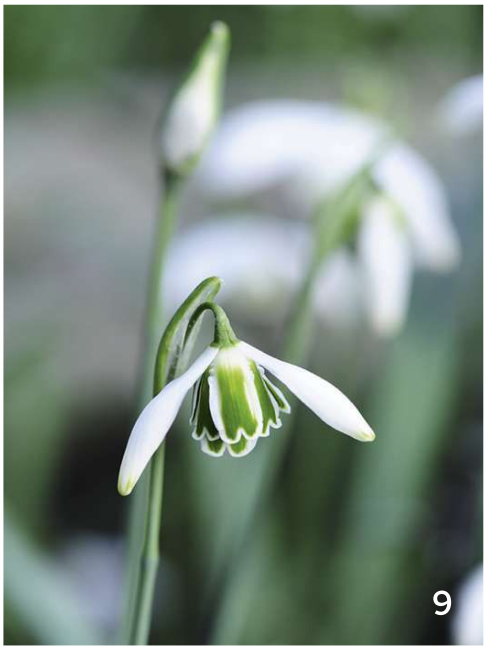
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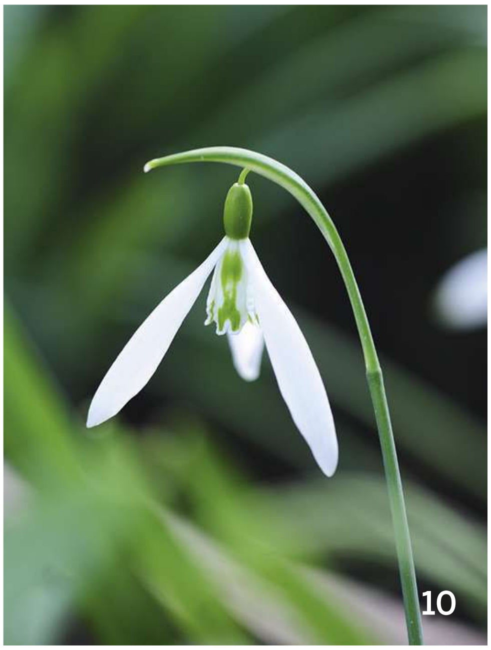
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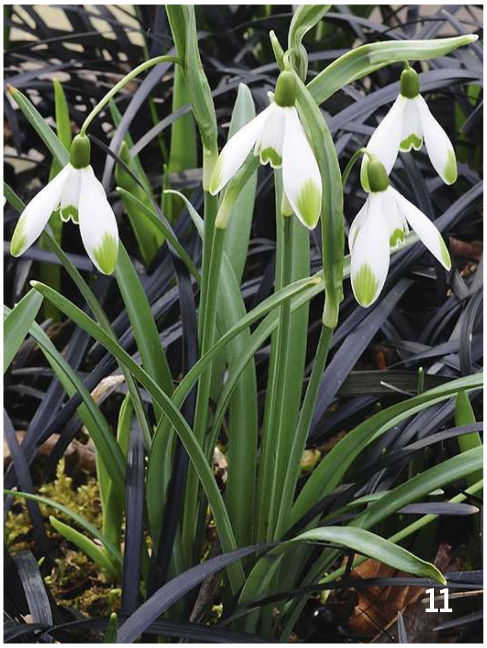
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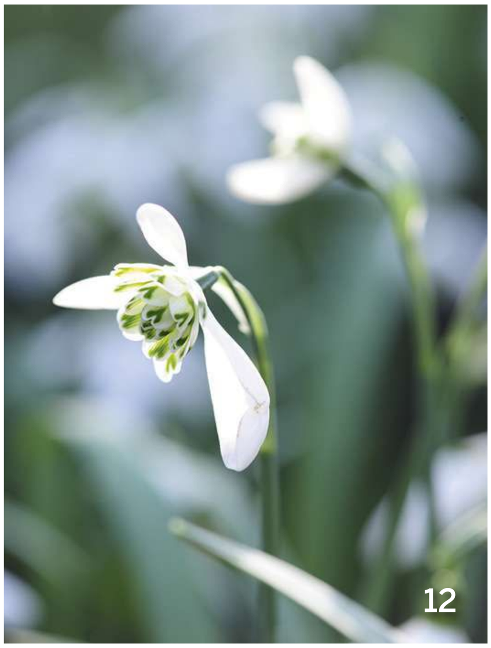
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two green eyes that inspired the name of this cultivar. As it is slow to establish it commands a high price that may make would-be collectors grumpy too. 17cm.

9 *G.* 'Nerissa'
Reliably double form which, at 15cm high, is slightly shorter than many other cultivars but, if it is happy, it will multiply with gratifying rapidity. 15cm.

10 *G.* 'Wasp'
A highly distinctive cultivar with exceptionally long and slender outer segments and a blurred cross marking on the inner segments. 20cm.

11 *G. nivalis* 'Viridapice'
This is a tall and strong-growing cultivar that was discovered around 100 years ago, and therefore has had ample time to prove its worth in the garden. 30cm.

12 *G.* 'Ballerina'
Neat and compact cultivar with extremely pretty double flowers. The inner section is tightly crammed with petals like a ballerina's tutu. Although slow to establish, it will steadily form a good clump if happy with its position. 12cm.

Snowdrop days

Rika will be opening her garden for two snowdrop days (see page 76) on 26 February and 5 March. The National Garden Scheme organises similar snowdrop days around the UK (see **ngs.org.uk** for details), and these are a great way to expand both your knowledge and your collection.

Where to buy

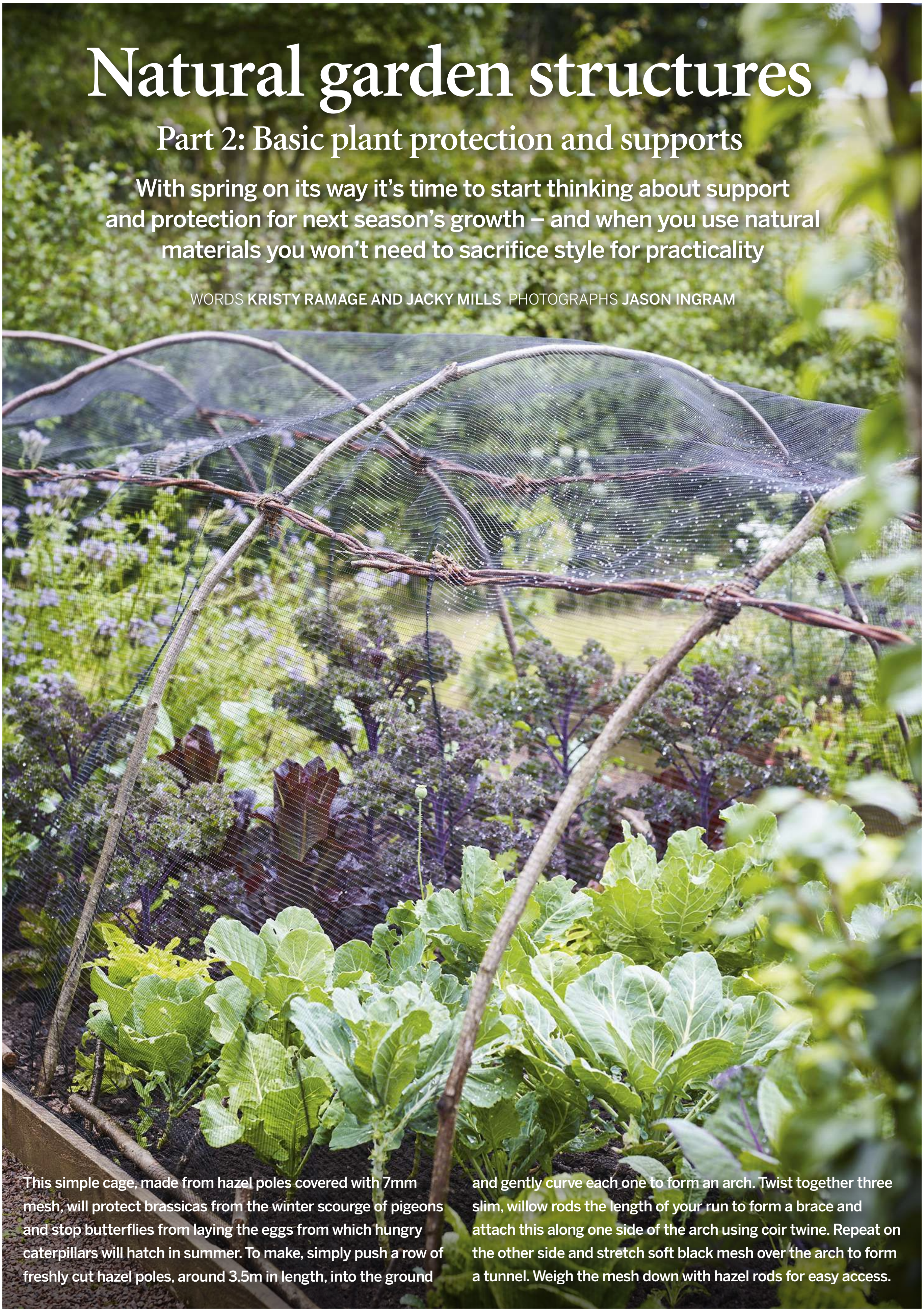
- **Avon Bulbs Ltd**
  Burnt House Farm, Mid Lambrook, South Petherton, Somerset TA13 5HE.
  Tel 01460 242177, avonbulbs.co.uk
- **Broadleigh Gardens**
  Barr House, Bishops Hull, Taunton, Somerset TA4 1AE.
  Tel 01823 286231, broadleighbulbs.co.uk
- **Cambo House & Estate**
  Kingsbarns, St Andrews, Fife KY16 8QD.
  Tel 01333 450054, camboestate.com
- **Woottens of Wenhaston**
  The Iris Field, Hall Road, Wenhaston, Suffolk IP19 9HF.
  Tel 01502 478258, woottensplants.com

Natural garden structures

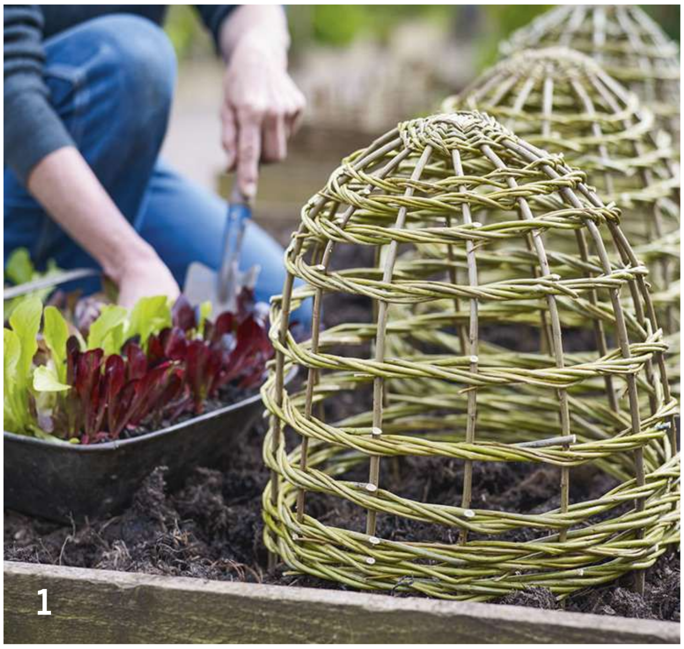
Part 2: Basic plant protection and supports

With spring on its way it's time to start thinking about support and protection for next season's growth – and when you use natural materials you won't need to sacrifice style for practicality

WORDS **KRISTY RAMAGE AND JACKY MILLS** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**



This simple cage, made from hazel poles covered with 7mm mesh, will protect brassicas from the winter scourge of pigeons and stop butterflies from laying the eggs from which hungry caterpillars will hatch in summer. To make, simply push a row of freshly cut hazel poles, around 3.5m in length, into the ground and gently curve each one to form an arch. Twist together three slim, willow rods the length of your run to form a brace and attach this along one side of the arch using coir twine. Repeat on the other side and stretch soft black mesh over the arch to form a tunnel. Weigh the mesh down with hazel rods for easy access.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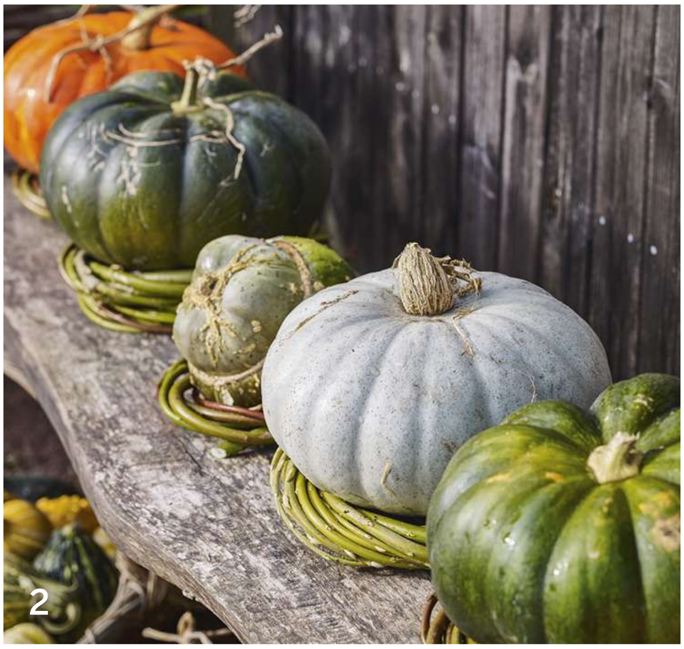
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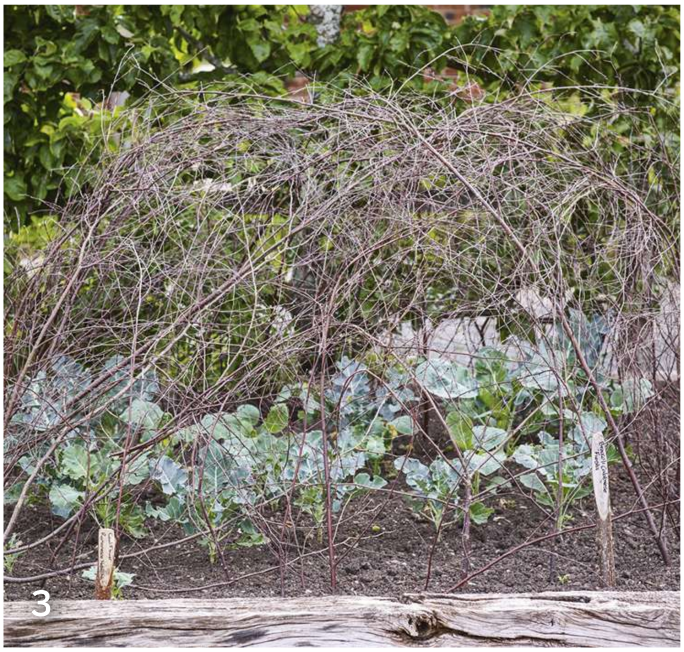
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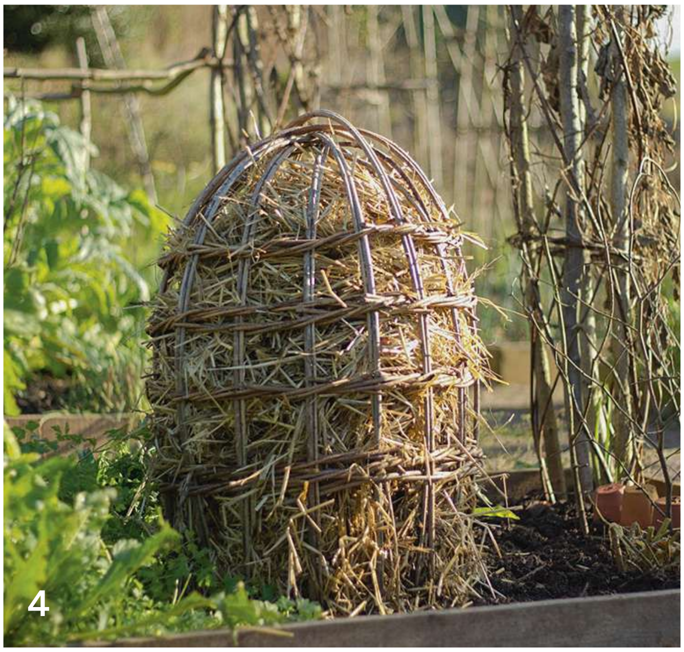
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4 KRISTY RAMAGE

Plant protection

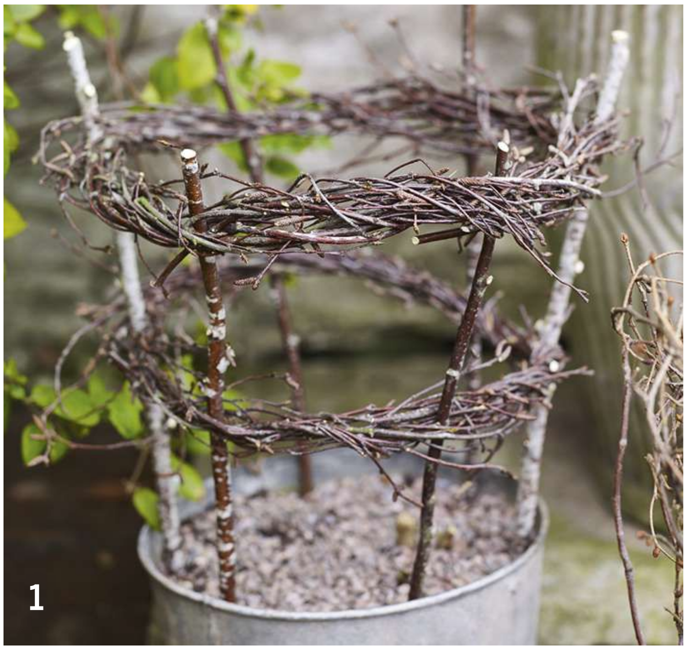
It takes just one or two heartbreaking losses to galvanise most gardeners into action to protect their plants. By using native materials and traditional methods you can create structures to safeguard your plants while also adding a great deal of character to your garden.

A woven, bell-shaped cloche **(1)** will protect small plants and seedlings from hens and pigeons, as well as providing some shade and shelter from adverse weather. You'll need some basic basket-making skills to create a structure like this (find details of courses on page 84 and at **basketmakersassociation.org.uk**), but once you've mastered the basic techniques, you'll be able to create numerous cloches in various sizes. They look particularly striking when used en masse. Make them early in the year to ensure you have them to hand when you plant out small seedlings, such as lettuces. Later in the year, harvested pumpkins and squashes will last far longer if you allow their skins to harden in the sun before storing. Perching your harvest on willow wreaths **(2)** will reduce the risk of rotting caused by trapped water. The wreaths are made by twisting together several lengths of pliable willow to form a compact circle (see page 83). A twiggy cage **(3)** is an attractive way to protect crops, such as young brassicas, from marauding pigeons while still allowing free movement of air. It's made by pushing supple, twiggy branches of hazel or birch directly into the ground, then gently pulling the tops inwards and threading them under and over each other to form a natural-looking canopy. You can also put your bell-shaped cloches to good use later in the year by stuffing them with straw **(4)** or leaves. This will offer some protection from freezing conditions and winter wet. Perfect for protecting crowns of plants, such as globe artichokes, or dahlias tubers you've left in the ground.

Supports for small plants and pots

Using natural materials, you can tailor your structures to suit an individual plant's growth habit and create supports that look attractive in the early part of the year when they are most on show. Keep them as light as possible so they don't overwhelm the planting.

A simple, flared structure made from sticks and twigs **(1)** offers natural-looking support for plants with lax growth habits, such as tulips and hyacinths. We made this by firmly pushing six pencil-thin, straight birch sticks, at a slight angle around the edge of a small (26cm diameter) pot. We then twisted bunches of thin, birch twigs together to form two lightweight wreaths of increasing diameter that we threaded on to the sticks. The twiggy ends of birch branches are very pliable when recently cut, so these simple wreaths will easily hold their shape and happily stay put without any need for a tie. Larger plants may need something more solid, such as this willow structure **(2)**. Here, we pushed dried willow rods (10cm diameter) directly into the ground around the fresh shoots of *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Sarah Bernhardt' to form uprights for the three willow rings. We made each ring by twisting together two pairs of willow withies and weaving the pairs in opposite directions around the uprights to form a strong, braided circle. You can also make a simple but stylish support, by gently bending freshly cut hazel rods (around 13mm diameter) to form interlocking arches **(3)**. Push these directly into the ground around your plant (here *Symphyotrichum* 'Little Carlow') and where the arches cross, use a willow tie to hold them tightly together. Simpler still, the twiggy ends of hazel branches **(4)**, speckled with swollen, cinnamon-coloured leaf buds, can look very attractive when used in a very loose weave to form a cylinder around a pot. This works particularly well with narcissus.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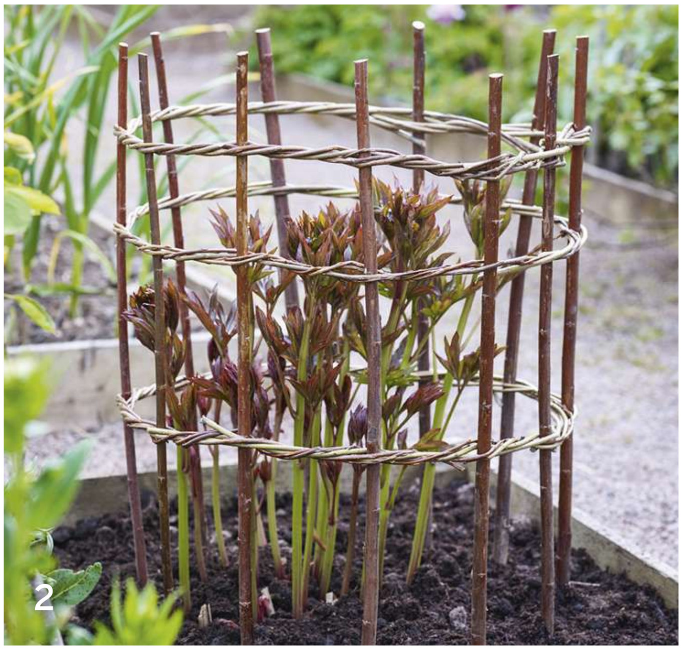
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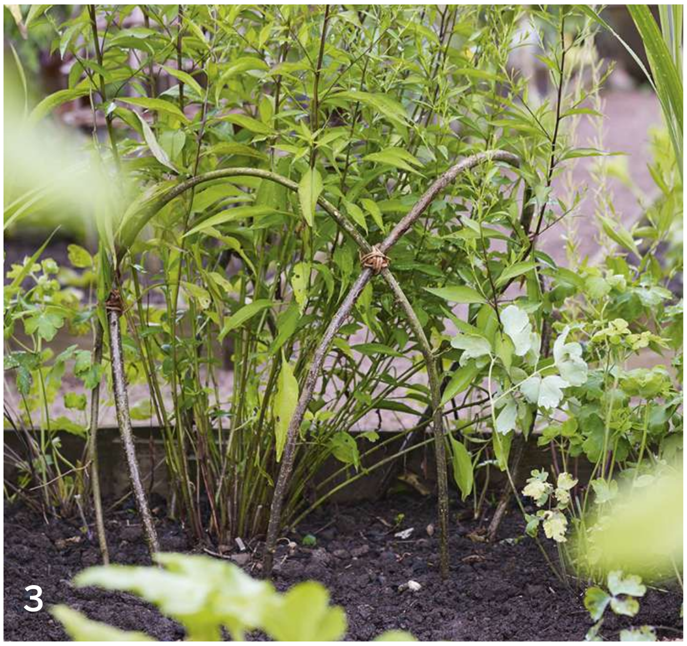
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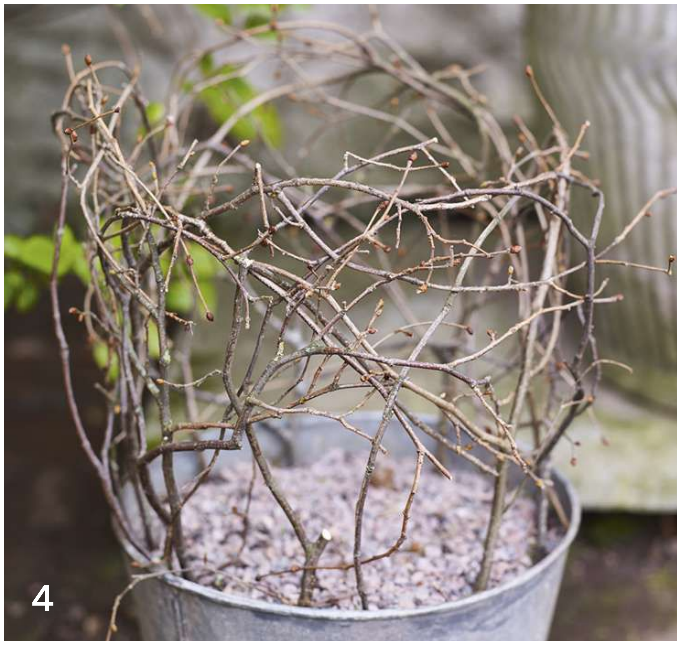
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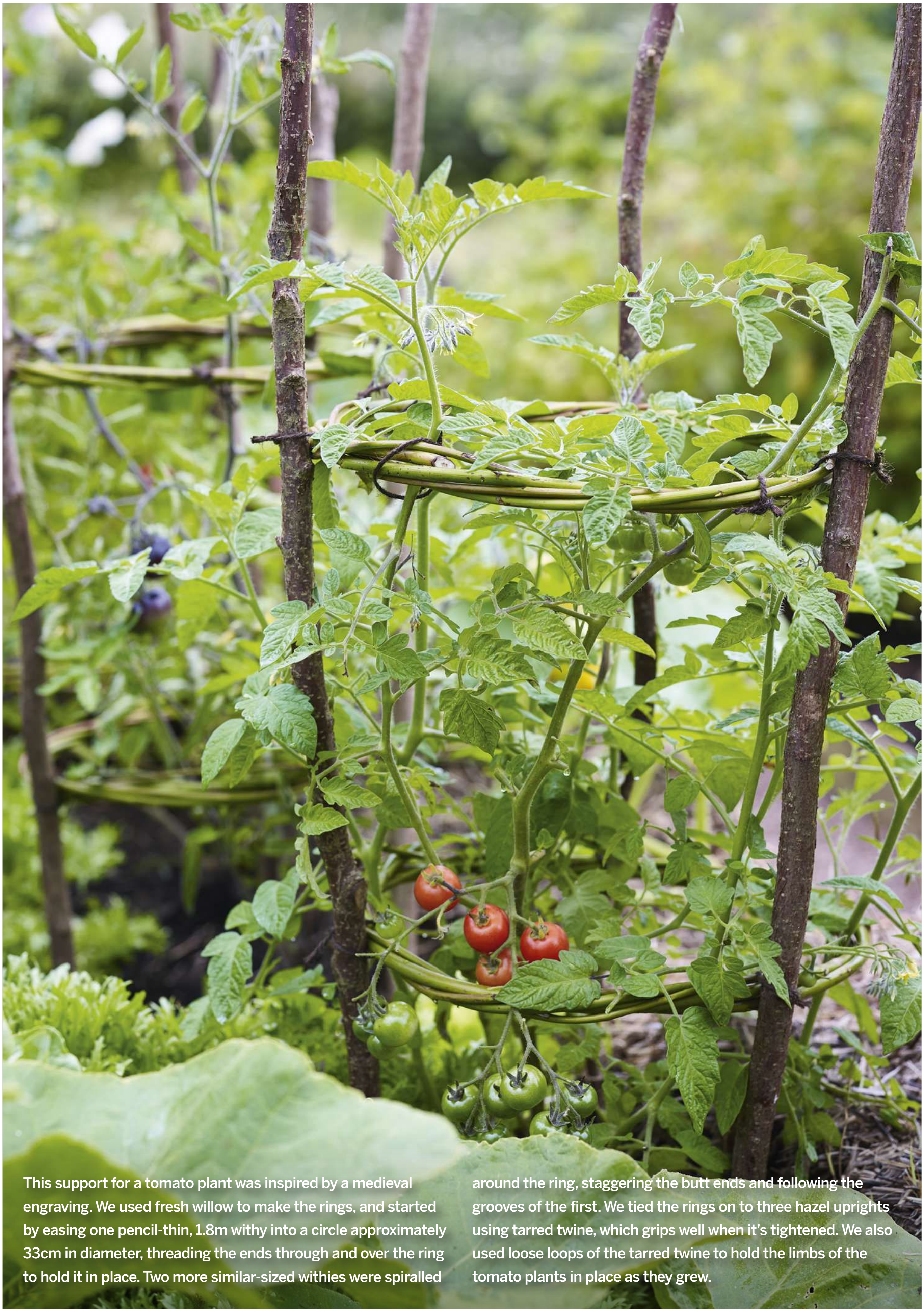


This support for a tomato plant was inspired by a medieval engraving. We used fresh willow to make the rings, and started by easing one pencil-thin, 1.8m withy into a circle approximately 33cm in diameter, threading the ends through and over the ring to hold it in place. Two more similar-sized withies were spiralled around the ring, staggering the butt ends and following the grooves of the first. We tied the rings on to three hazel uprights using tarred twine, which grips well when it's tightened. We also used loose loops of the tarred twine to hold the limbs of the tomato plants in place as they grew.

Basket makers and suppliers

- **Clyde Hoare**

Upton Bishop, Ross-on-Wye,
Herefordshire HR9 7QP.
Tel 07866 138436, clyde@wildwicker.com

Runs courses in basket making, hurdles and living willow structures.

- **Judy Hartley**

judy.hartley@yahoo.co.uk

Makes baskets and teaches basket making in Monmouthshire. Judy also made the beautiful woven willow cloches shown on page 81.

- **Harrod Horticultural**

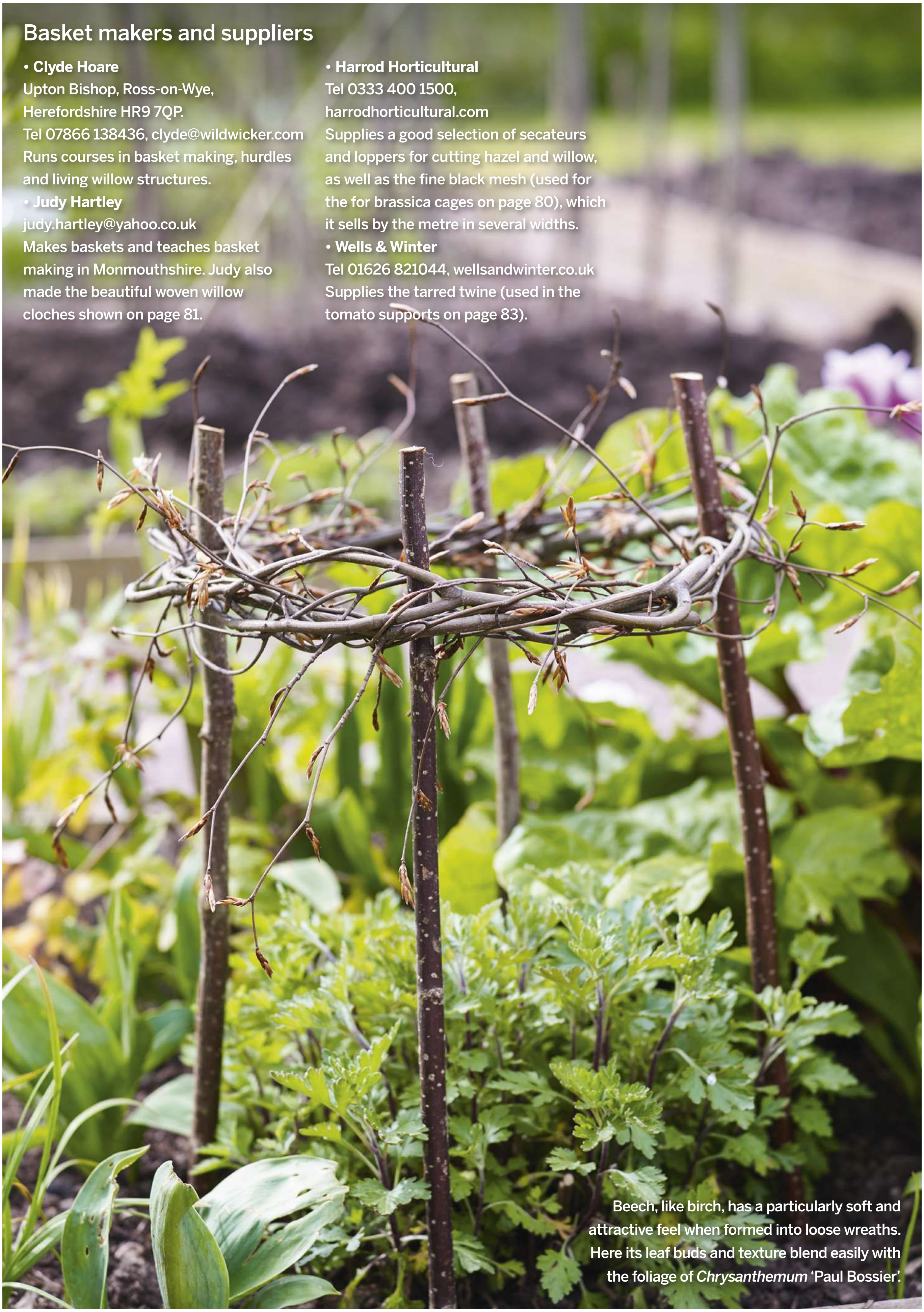
Tel 0333 400 1500,
harrodhorticultural.com

Supplies a good selection of secateurs and loppers for cutting hazel and willow, as well as the fine black mesh (used for the for brassica cages on page 80), which it sells by the metre in several widths.

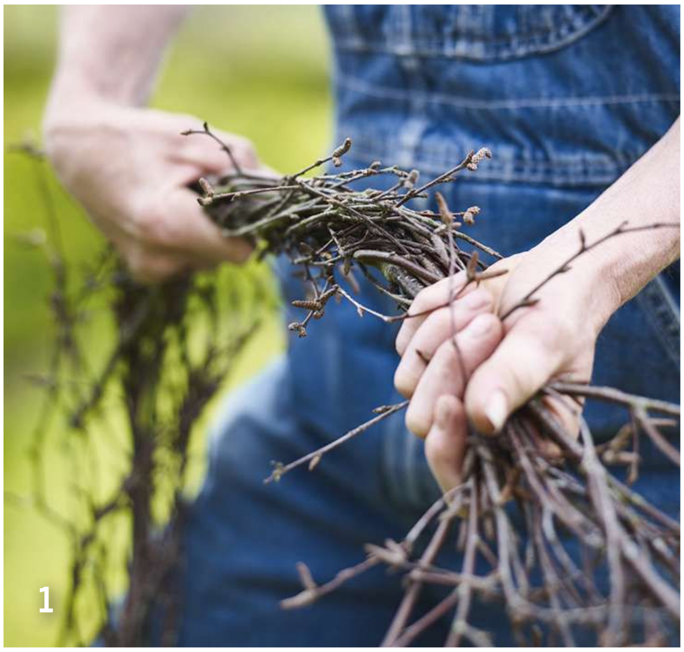
- **Wells & Winter**

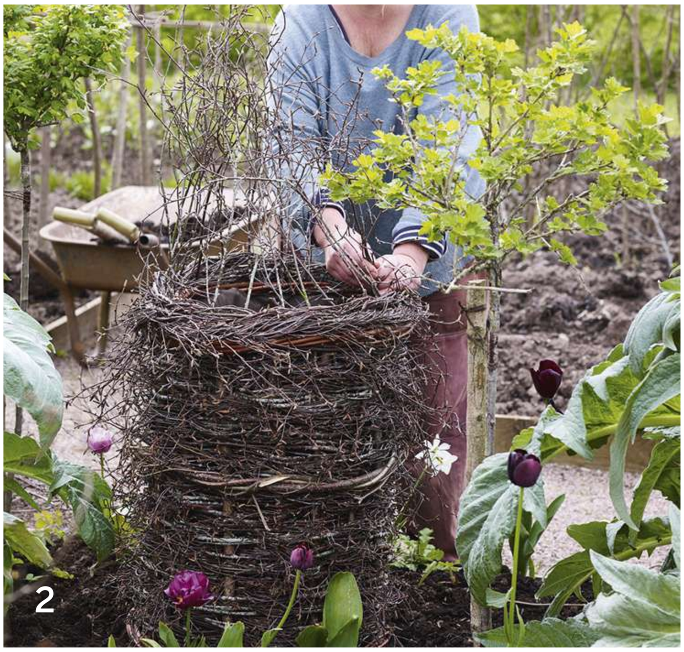
Tel 01626 821044, wellsandwinter.co.uk

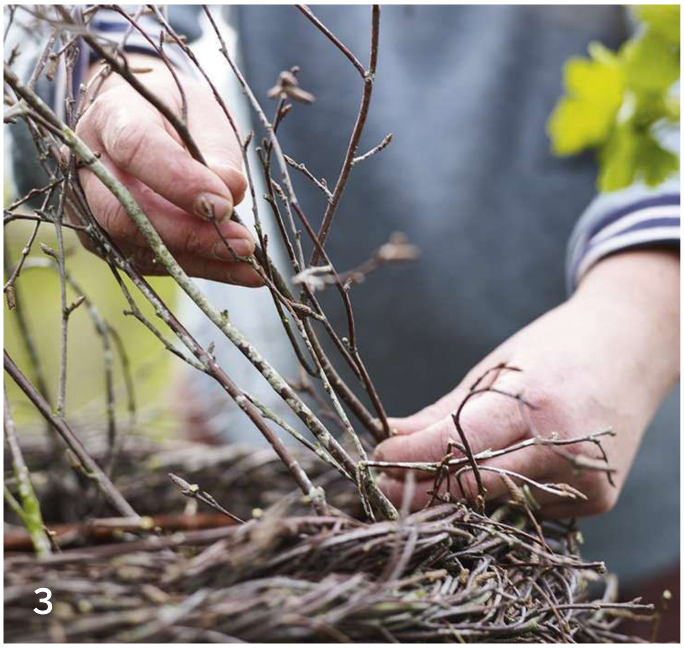
Supplies the tarred twine (used in the tomato supports on page 83).

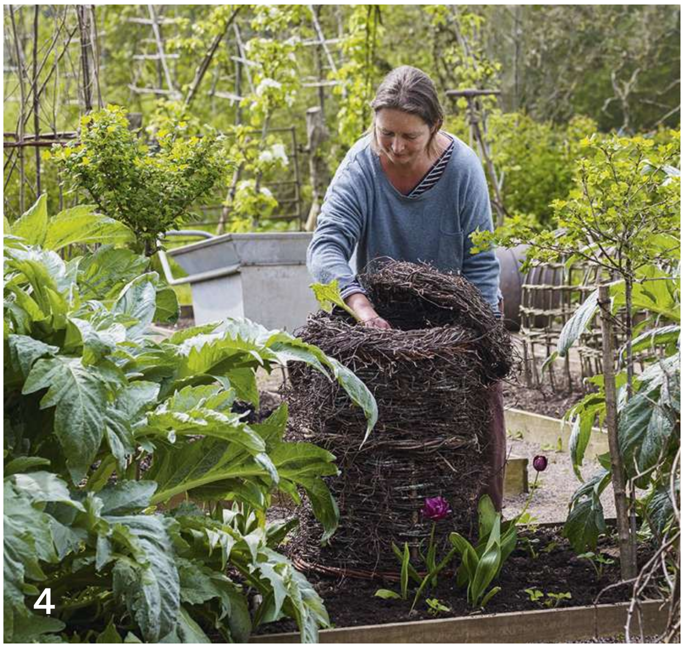


Beech, like birch, has a particularly soft and attractive feel when formed into loose wreaths. Here its leaf buds and texture blend easily with the foliage of *Chrysanthemum* 'Paul Bossier'.







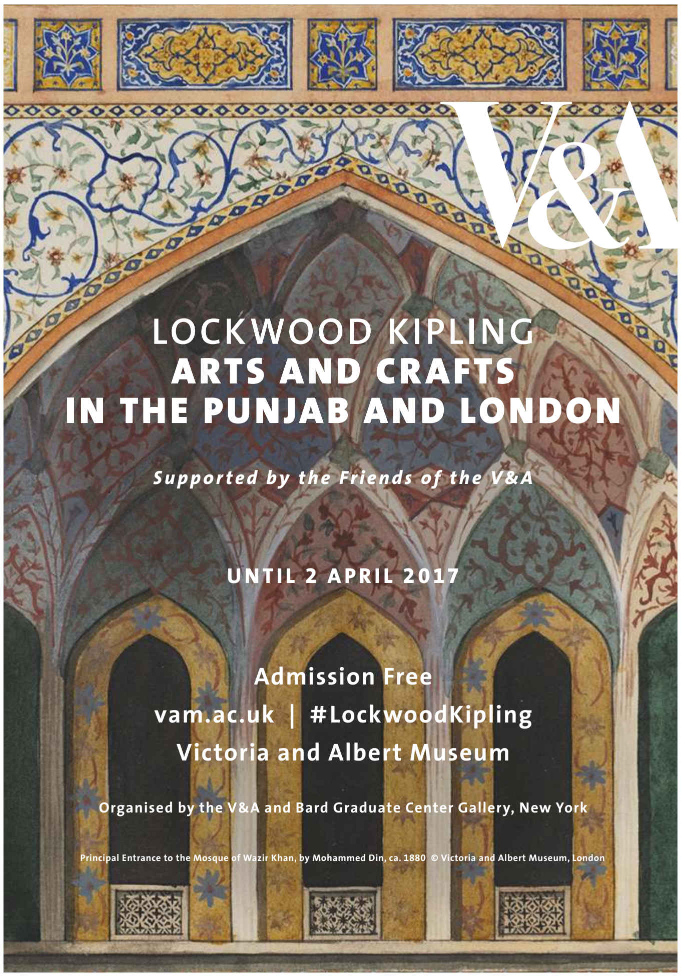


Birch and hazel rhubarb forcer

Early season rhubarb is always a treat, and this forcer made largely from birch twigs is relatively simple to construct and has a more natural look than terracotta forcers. Birch, unlike hazel, is best cut before midwinter, otherwise it has a tendency to bleed.

Birch has a natural springiness that makes it an excellent material to twist together into rope-like strands to create the thick woven walls of this rhubarb forcer. We used an old electrical cable drum, 76cm in diameter, and drilled 16 holes equally spaced around the top and bottom rims. This held the 16 hazel-rod uprights in place and we also temporarily used a hazel ring (made to the same diameter as the base) to keep the rods at the correct angle while the walls are woven from the base. For the walls, twist together bunches of pliable twiggy birch **(1)** and weave these through the uprights (behind one upright, in front of the next, etc). Start from the bottom, alternating the weave from one row to the next. We added a ring of twisted hazel halfway up to give the forcer greater rigidity. To finish, weave a rim at the top by adding 32 new pieces of twiggy birch, each about 50cm long, slotting the thick ends either side of the 16 hazel uprights **(2)**. Pull one branch down in front of two uprights and then behind and out from the third, working from left to right repeating this weave with consecutive uprights until the twiggy birch are all woven in **(3)**. You need to weave the circular lid **(4)** separately, like an upside-down basket, but as an alternative you could simply place a piece of slate over the top to exclude any light. A small amount of light may get through these woven walls, so if you want to exclude light completely, sew in a lining of lightproof fabric.

NEXT MONTH Statement pieces.



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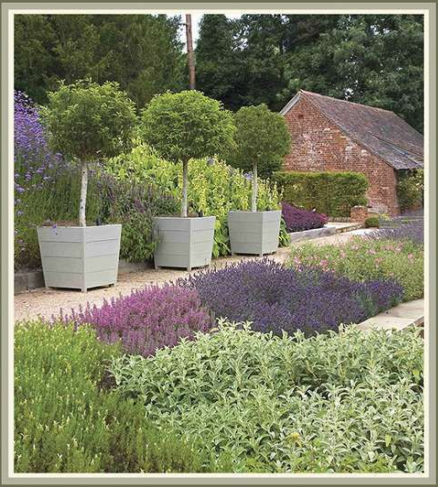

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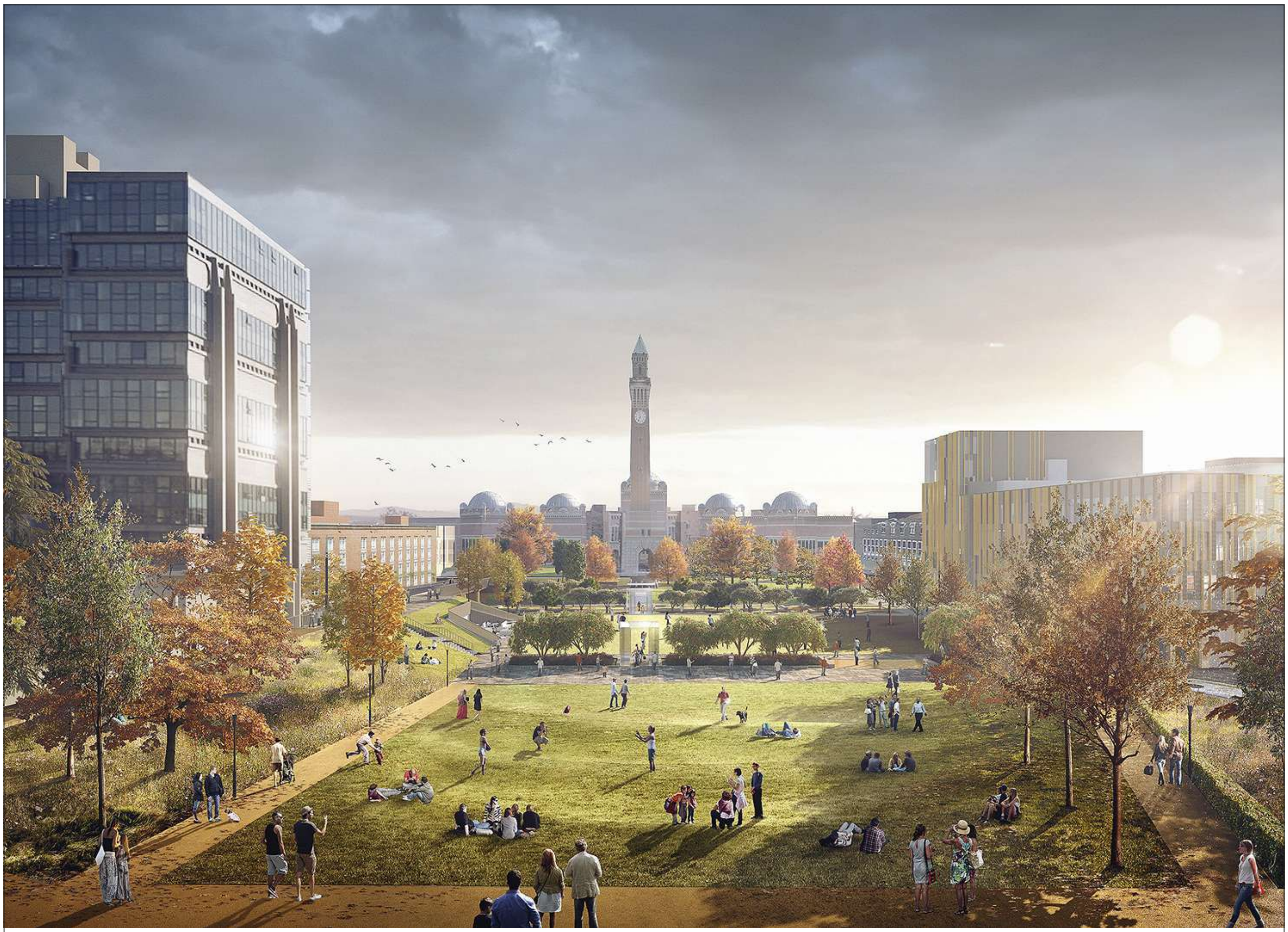
UPDATE COMPILED BY ANNIE GATTI



ARQUI9, CHURCHMAN

REDEVELOPMENT

Heart of green

Churchman Landscape Architects has submitted for planning approval its plans to relandscape part of the University of Birmingham's Edgbaston campus. Its scheme embraces the 1900's axis defined by the Joseph Chamberlain Memorial Clock Tower, which honours the University's first Chancellor, and introduces a 40m-long deck for pedestrians and cyclists, alongside ramped pathways to connect the site's various levels. Lawned embankments will frame the central grassed square and native plants will provide wildlife habitats. **churchmanlandscapearchitects.co.uk**

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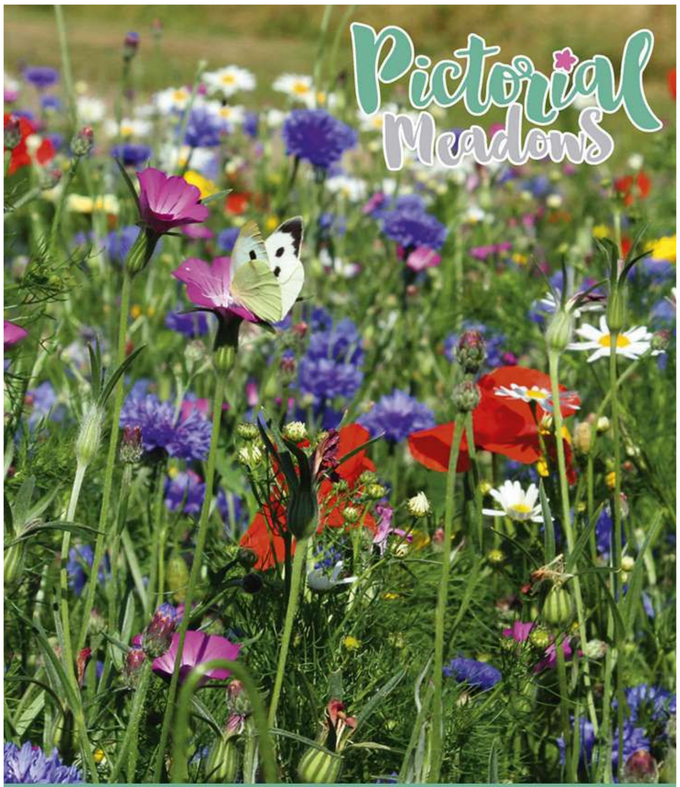

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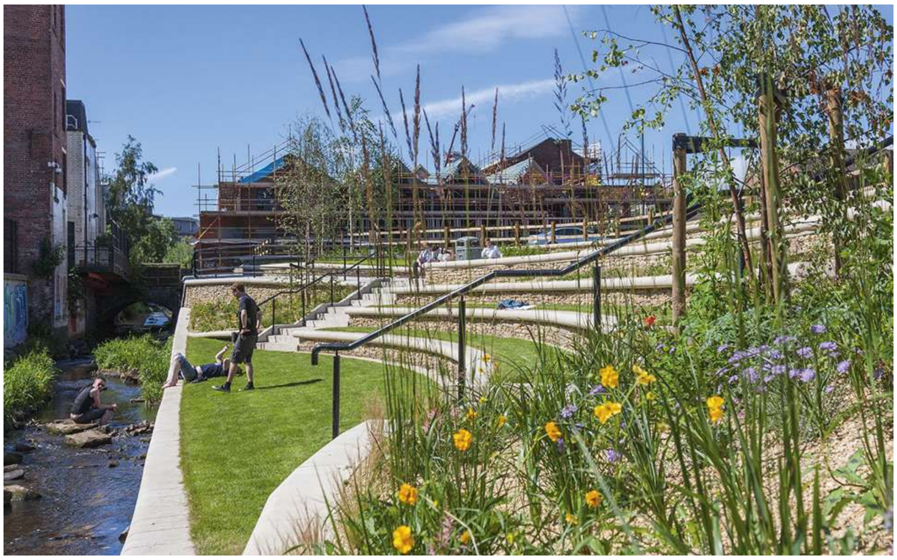
AWARD

Urban terraces

A pocket park on the banks of Porter Brook in Sheffield's city centre has won Best Contribution to the Built Environment in the 2016 Living Waterways awards from the Canal and River Trust. On the site of a car park, where the brook had been hidden inside a culvert, the new park consists of a series of grassed terraces retained by gabion walls of local gritstone. These provide seating for the public and also help to mitigate flooding. It is hoped that the new riverside walkway will eventually run the length of the restored brook. **canalrivertrust.org.uk**



GREEN CITY

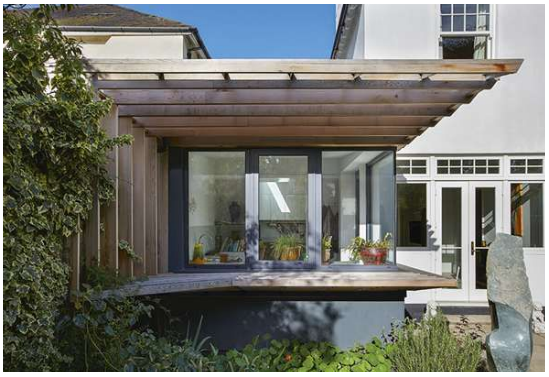
La vie en verte

Parisians are being encouraged to green up their city's streets, walls and roofs. A renewable, three-year *permis de végétaliser* allows residents to create small gardens in public spaces – and provides them with a free planting kit that includes seeds and topsoil. The scheme is part of Mayor Anne Hidalgo's pledge to add 100 hectares (247 acres) of vegetation to the city by 2020. Paris is already home to several vertical gardens by Patrick Blanc, whose green-walled office is shown left. **paris.fr/permisdevegetaliser**

ARCHITECTURE

Missing link

London architects Patalab Architecture has helped link a refurbished Edwardian home in London to its garden by creating a distinctive pavilion-like garden room. The glazed garden room sits within a frame of timber fins attached to the house. The spacing between the cedar fins widens as the timber structure extends into the garden, creating a subtle visual link between the building and the woody plants. The fins also help to shade the room, which is glazed on two sides. **patalab.com**



RESTORATION

Treasuring the past

Allen Scott Landscape Architecture has won the 2016 Landscape Institute's Heritage and Conservation Award for its restoration of Worth Park in Crawley, West Sussex. The project, which took two years, restored many original features of the gardens that had been damaged or destroyed, including a huge fountain and sculptural centrepieces, such as this sundial in the formal gardens. **allenscott.co.uk**

SAM THORNE; PATRICK BLANC; JULIAN ABRAMS; ALLEN SCOTT

AWARD

Street life

Toronto's Underpass Park, which has transformed a grey area beneath one of the city's flyovers, has won an Award of Excellence for General Design in the 2016 American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) Professional awards. The park is densely planted along its edges, and ribbon-like wall structures define activity zones, such as children's play areas, basketball, roller hockey and skateboarding areas, while a section of the flyover's ceiling is now covered with a reflective public art piece that brightens the space. **asla.org/2016awards**

NO SNOW DOME

The 360 Garden Igloo is a novel way to enjoy your garden even on a freezing winter's day – or possibly indulge in a spot of night-time star gazing. Made from PVC with a zip-close door, it's weatherproof and windproof up to 62km/h, and can be secured using either metal clamps and sandbag rings or tent pegs. With a diameter of 3.6m, it's big enough to fit a table and several chairs. £649; cuckooland.com

Notebook

- The theme of this year's International Garden Design Seminar of the Garden and Landscape Design Association of Ireland is **The Designed Garden: Completing the Picture**. Speakers include Thomas Doxiadis, Sue and Bleddyn Wynn-Jones, Noel van Mierlo and Emma Mazzullo. 11 February, Crowne Plaza hotel, Dublin; glda.ie
- Designer Kristy Ramage, who co-authored our natural supports feature (page 80), leads a one-day workshop on making **hazel and willow supports** with head gardener Steve Lannin at designer Arne Maynard's home, Allt-y-bela, Monmouthshire. 28 February, £160; arnemaynard.com
- Find inspiration for your perfect **garden hide-out** in *The Hinterland*, a new book from publishers Gestalten, full of ideas for cabin architecture and design. €39.50; gestalten.com
- Book now for a two-day conference on **Trees, People and the Built Environment** organised by the Institute of Chartered Foresters. The conference will focus on why trees are an integral part of highway transport design, and the role of trees in improving our health. 5-6 April, University of Birmingham; charteredforesters.org
- Snap up a place on Jekka McVicar's practical masterclass in **Herb Garden Design** on 29 April, held at her Herb Farm, in Gloucestershire. £185; jekkasherbfarm.com
- Join a snowdrop tour of three private gardens in Kent with **Garden Days Out** on 22 February. £80, including lunch. Or book for the 16 June visit, which includes Stavordale Priory [issue 217, p34], the Somerset garden of Michael Le Poer Trench and Sir Cameron Mackintosh. gardendaysout.com

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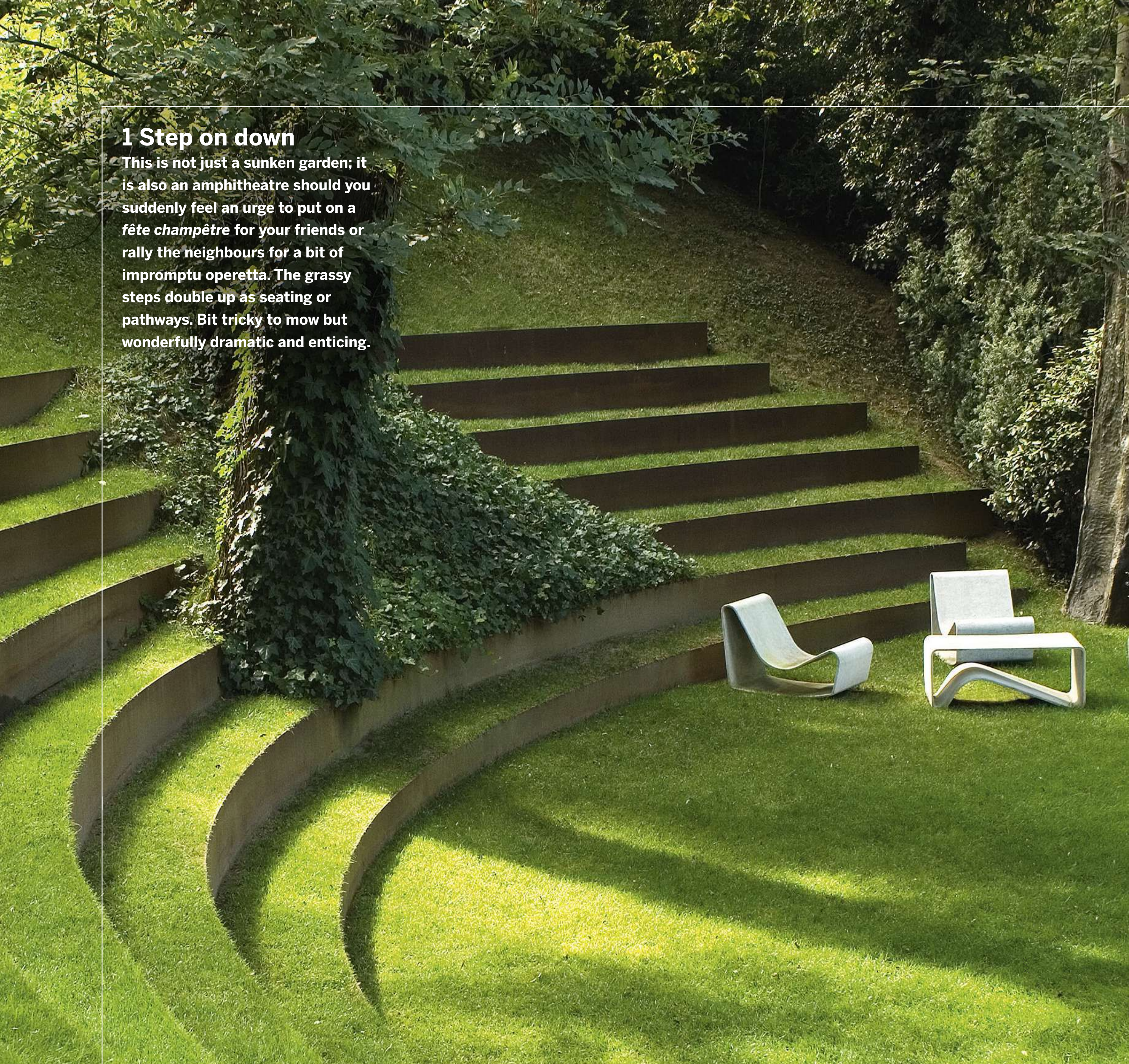

1 Step on down

This is not just a sunken garden; it is also an amphitheatre should you suddenly feel an urge to put on a *fête champêtre* for your friends or rally the neighbours for a bit of impromptu operetta. The grassy steps double up as seating or pathways. Bit tricky to mow but wonderfully dramatic and enticing.

On a different level

Sunken gardens don't need to be grand affairs, simply lowering a section of your garden can offer some seclusion and give you a whole new perspective

WORDS **JAMES ALEXANDER-SINCLAIR**

James Alexander-Sinclair is a garden designer, writer, broadcaster and founder of into-gardens.com. He has served on the RHS Council for the past five years.

2

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1 GUY HERVAIS; 2 JOANNA KOSSAK / GAP PHOTOS / DESIGNER, CHARLIE ALBONE - SPONSOR, HUSQVARNA; 3 FRANZ MARC FREI / GETTY IMAGES; 4 JASON INGRAM

2 Secret hideaway

This was designed by the Australian designer Charlie Albone at the 2016 RHS Chelsea Flower Show for Husqvarna. The sunken lawn and surrounding hedges and pleached trees create a wonderfully secluded area within the garden. It is designed as a refuge not only from the world but also from the rest of the garden.

3 Hidden depths

This takes sunken gardens to another standard: this garden (part of the Barbican complex in London) is mostly below water level. A series of interlocked sitting areas linked by pergolas and arbours has been built in the lake to give a completely different view of both gardens and buildings – without the need of a bathing suit.

4 Underworldly

Probably the most exciting sunken garden of this century. The *Orpheus* landform at Boughton House in Northamptonshire consists of a large, inverted pyramid with spiralling grass paths and was designed by Kim Wilkie. It echoes the shape of a nearby mound and is surrounded by crisply edged canals.

Back in December, you may remember, we were banging on about the advantages of being up high: of swinging around in trees espying the far horizons. This month we're heading in the opposite direction to sunken gardens, which, although they may not be much cop when it comes to vistas and views, have a lot to brag about. There are several gardens built in deep craters or disused quarries. The most extreme is one in California that was carved out of a cave system – complete with lots of skylights, otherwise it would be a very dull garden – by a Sicilian immigrant called Baldassare Forestiere in the early 20th century. You needn't go quite that far; a sunken garden in its simplest form is just a change of level: with a few steps down you can create an entirely different atmosphere.

The essential purpose of a sunken garden is privacy, which is something that everybody wants in a garden. Nobody likes being overlooked: indeed, some people are completely obsessed with the possibility that the neighbours might be able to see them. This is in spite of the fact that, in my experience, all but the most inquisitive neighbours are usually too busy to watch and anyway, very few people do much that is worth watching. That said, it is always fun to have a hideaway and a good way to achieve this is to burrow into the ground where it is likely to be warmer (we are out of the wind), more secluded and closer to the earth.

Having excavated, then the obvious thing to do is make some sort of seating area so you can enjoy this bolt hole. We have all seen lots of them at flower shows (designer Cleve West does them particularly well): intimate sunken terraces with comfortable seating and perhaps a bit of a cascade or a still pond. Alternatively, it could be a much simpler arrangement with chunks of log gathered

▷

5 Rock of stages

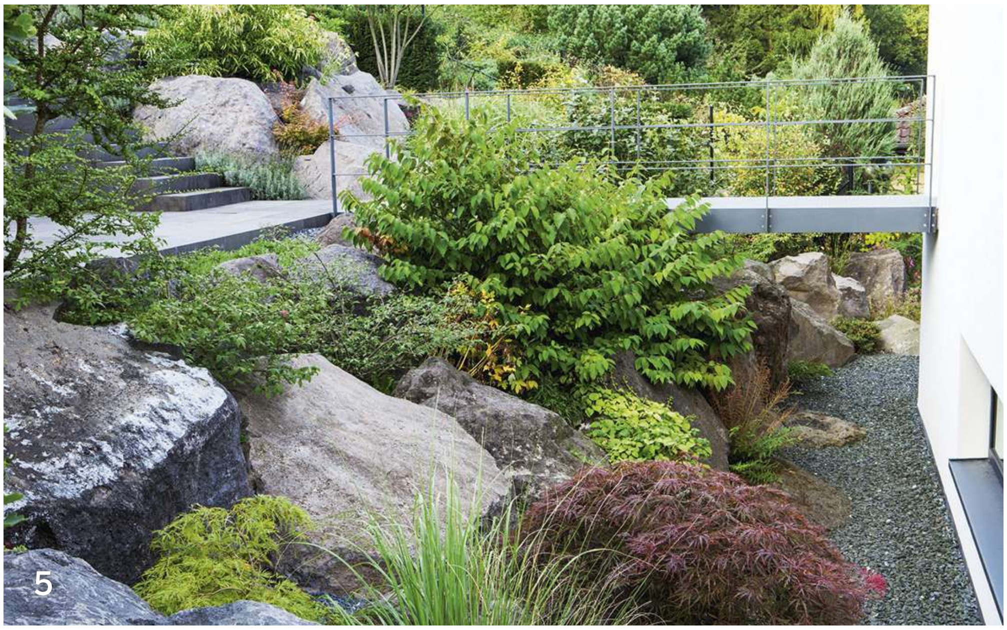
Parts of Luxembourg are very hilly and many of the houses are dug into the sides of steep slopes. This can make garden building a trifle problematic as in the case of this garden, which involved lots of rocks and large cranes. It was designed and built by the German garden designer Peter Berg who is particularly skilled at this sort of work.

6 Snake in the grass

A raised path – such as this nifty Corten steel number – will, by default, create a vantage point from which you can look down upon the plants thus affording you a different viewpoint. This snaking path is part of a garden dedicated to native flora in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne, in Australia.

7 Sunken style

You can always rely on Great Dixter to come up with the perfect blend of ancient and modern. This area known as the Sunk Garden was designed in 1921 by Christopher Lloyd's father Nathaniel. It is made from York stone and scattered with mat-forming ground cover, such as *Acaena novae-zelandiae* and bird's foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*).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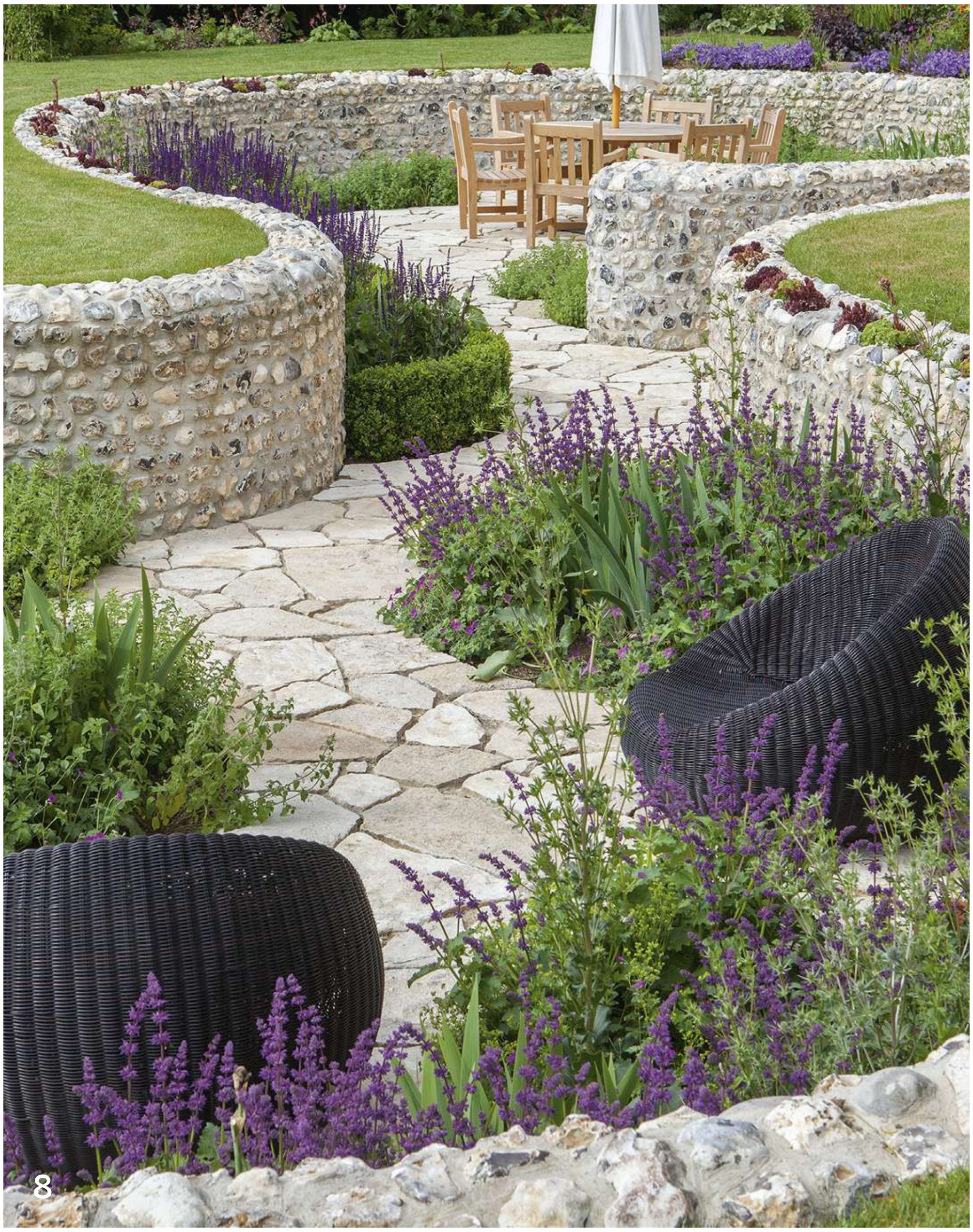
5 MARIANNE MAJERUS / DESIGN: PETER BERG; 6 KIM WOODS RABBIDGE; 7 MICHAEL GARLICK

▷ around a fire pit for extra cosiness – although, if I might rain briefly on my own parade, a fire can be an appalling idea if badly positioned. The smoke has an annoying habit of blowing all over the place so you run the risk of ending the evening with streaming eyes and smelling a bit like a kippered herring. If you are, unsurprisingly, drawn to the myriad, marshmallow-toasting attractions of an outdoor fire then I beg you to take careful notice of the prevailing winds or rig up some sort of chimney.

While we are being sensible, there are various other practicalities that must also be considered and the most important of these is drainage. I know that sounds fearfully dull but not nearly as dull as sitting in your new sunken garden up to your ankles in water. Bear in mind that by digging a hole you are inviting all the rainwater to gather in one place – which may well be a reason why many sunken gardens boast ponds on the lower level. It would, therefore, be sensible to take advice from a wise landscaper to avoid disappointment (and soggy socks). While you have their attention you could also consult them about any surrounding walls, which need to be robust as they are being asked to hold back a considerable weight of soil.

Not everybody has the skill, desire or resources to create something gobsmackingly dramatic and theatrical, so if you are after something a bit less convoluted then a similar effect can be achieved by simply lowering a patch of lawn and surrounding it with deep and gorgeous borders – ideally with ramps, not steps as that makes mowing much easier: humping a heavy mower up steps always leads to bad language. This not only affords you the pleasure of a slightly secluded refuge but gives you a different



MARIANNE MAJERUS / DESIGN: IAN KITSON

8 Go with the flow

This series of beautifully detailed flint-walled, sunken sitting areas was designed by Ian Kitson for a private client. The view from the house of the distant landscape is unbeatable so by sinking the garden into the ground it creates an impression of flow and continuity with the countryside. Very clever indeed.

Useful information

Kim Wilkie's *Orpheus* landform at Boughton House is open to the public on selected dates throughout the year. See website for details.

- **Boughton House** Kettering, Northamptonshire NN14 1BJ. Tel 01536 515731, boughtonhouse.co.uk

view of the plants. Most of the time we view our gardens by working in them or by walking through them, which means that we are always admiring the same aspect of the planting. It is exciting to be able to see things from a slightly alternative angle. In fact, I would go as far as to say I think that it is important occasionally to look at your borders from both a prone position and from the top of a small stepladder so you get to appreciate a completely different side to your garden. □

READER EVENT

Don't miss James's talk on Sex, Death and Gardens at the *Gardens Illustrated* Festival, 25-26 March 2017. See page 9 or go to **gardensfestival.com** for details.

Gardens to visit

If you get the chance to visit Butchart Gardens near Victoria on Canada's Vancouver Island then take it. An extraordinarily joyful collection of colourful gardens and soaring fountains in a disused quarry. **butchartgardens.com**

A bit closer to home, Kensington Palace in London has a fine example of a classic sunken garden, which was designed in 1908 to replace some potting sheds. **hrp.org.uk/kensington-palace**

The Forestiere Underground Gardens, near Fresno, California, were burrowed out of the ground over many years, starting in 1906, to create a home and garden for Baldassare Forestiere. There are many courtyards growing an abundance of fruit. **undergroundgardens.com**

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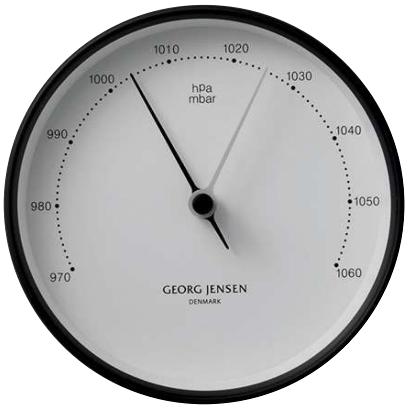

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Education GUIDE

Are you looking to change career, gain accreditation or simply learn more about your passion? Choose the best course for you from this selection of full-time, part-time and short courses.

Student Profile:

CHEYENNE EASTWOOD, STREETSCAPE APPRENTICE

How did you choose your place of study?

I took a Level 1 course in horticulture and was hooked. Level 2 required work-based training, which lead me to Streetscape, a social enterprise team who offer 18-25 year olds apprenticeships in landscape gardening. My Streetscape apprenticeship boosted my confidence and standard of work. I have now continued my career as a glasshouse apprentice in Kew Gardens.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?

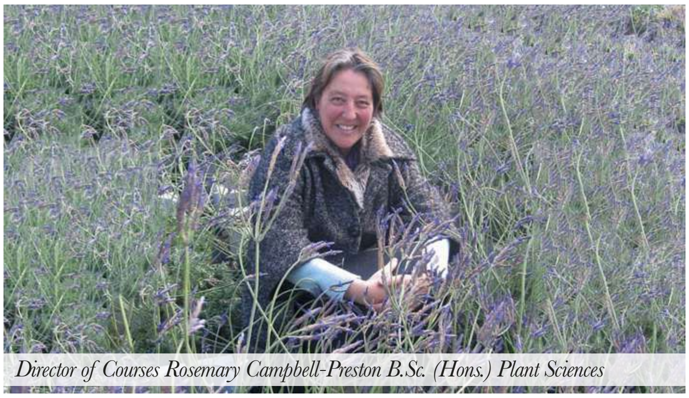
The thing I enjoy most about what I do is helping others experience something better. I find it really satisfying turning something derelict into something beautiful. Working at Kew gives me the opportunity to learn about the many different types of plants, their sciences and how we can use them, whether it is for medicinal, ornamental, decorative purpose. I enjoy learning about how different cultures interact with their native plants.

What aspect of the course has been the most rewarding?

The most rewarding part of my journey so far has to be while I was an apprentice with Streetscape as I gained so much from them. I was able to help build a garden designed for a little blind girl. It was so satisfying and rewarding that she was able to go and play in her garden that was once very child unfriendly and was not suitable for her at all.

For more information: visit **streetscape.org.uk**, or phone **020 3542 3464**

Liriodendron tulipifera



Director of Courses Rosemary Campbell-Preston B.Sc. (Hons.) Plant Sciences

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The Plant School has won several awards at RHS Chelsea and Hampton Court Flower Shows for its exhibits. Come and meet course directors at The Plant School stand at either of those shows in 2017.

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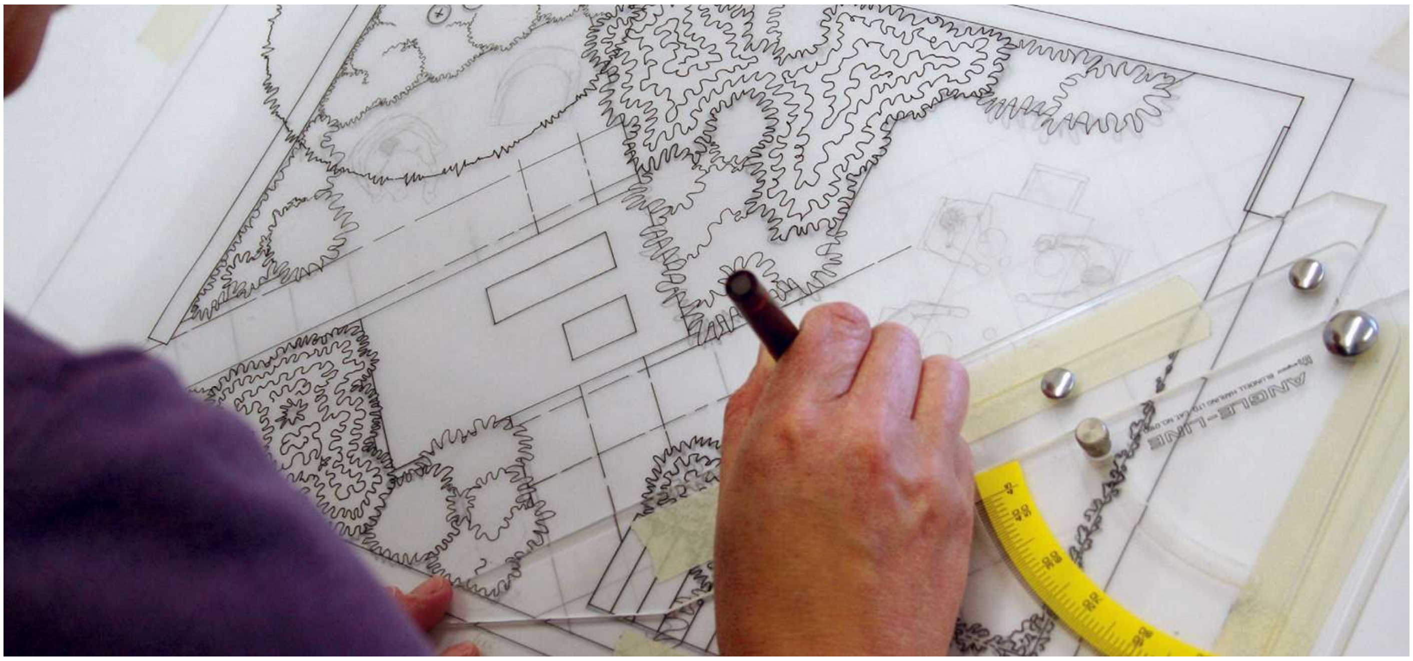
Blakesley,
Northamptonshire
NN12 8RD

Tel 01327 861150

Web theplantschool.org

Email rosemary@theplantschool.org

THE PLANT SCHOOL



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We also offer short courses in conjunction with the Royal Horticultural Society at RHS Garden Wisley. Each course concentrates on a specific element of garden design and is suitable for both professionals and the amateur enthusiast. For more information please visit our website or contact our administration office on 01483 762955.

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Student Profile:

WILL WILLIAMS, LONDON COLLEGE OF GARDEN DESIGN

Why did you choose to do a garden design course?
I had previously studied horticulture so when I finished my course I decided that I wanted to learn more about the design side and applied to study at the London College of Garden Design.

How did you choose your place of study?
I looked at a few options, all at various price ranges. But I really want to make a career of garden design and decided to invest in my future with the course that would set me up for a professional career.

What part of the course has been the most rewarding?
Learning to think in three dimensions, not just for structural design, but for an approach to planting design that I never realised was possible.

How has doing the course changed your career options – or perhaps even your life?
After completion of the course, I felt that I had the confidence and knowledge to set up my own practice, this has been a huge success. I've collaborated on an exhibit at Chelsea and completed a show garden at Hampton Court Palace in my first full year, getting a Silver RHS medal. Without the course, I wouldn't be where I am today.

Student Profile:

HANNAH SCHLOTTER, CAPEL MANOR COLLEGE

How did you choose your course?
I chose to do a Diploma in Horticulture because I knew I was just touching the surface of plant knowledge and science and I was thirsty to know more. I was already volunteering on a market garden, but I wanted to deepen and broaden my horticultural knowledge to improve my confidence and chances of getting paid work in the field.

What do you love most about the course?
The most rewarding part of the course was gaining so much new knowledge through all of the research done for our assignments. I now see the world in a new way, and it takes me longer to walk anywhere because I'm busy identifying what plants are growing in all of the front gardens.

How has the course changed your career?
It's opened up a world of new networks to me. I successfully applied for a David Colegrave Foundation scholarship and started a YouTube channel called Hannah Grows. I'm now an Ambassador for Grow Wild and have presented gardening features for Channel 4. It's also helped me land my dream job teaching the local community how to grow and cook organic food.

Any tips you would give to someone considering a career in horticulture?
My tip would be to supplement your education with practical experience, be it growing plants at home or volunteering in larger gardens. I found it helped to cement the theory when I was putting it into action.

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Tel 01245 424200
Email admissions@writtle.ac.uk
Web writtle.ac.uk

1893 Writtle University College

Student Profile:

JAMES HAGAN, BRINSBURY COLLEGE

How did you choose your place of study?
My local college was traditionally academic and I knew this wasn't right for me. I researched agricultural colleges and found Brinsbury. I was struck by the variety of courses and felt that it was the right place for me to study.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?
I enjoy learning to identify plants by their botanical names – it's a great skill to have. I suppose the best thing about what I do is the variety. No two days are the same.

What part of the course has been the most rewarding?
I had the opportunity to work on a show garden for the Ideal Home Show. I found it so rewarding to be a part of a project from conception right through to completion. It was great to see how far we had progressed. It is definitely one of my greatest achievements in horticulture to date.

Any tips you would give to someone considering a career in horticulture?
I think a better question is 'why wouldn't you consider a career in horticulture?' Every day is different and the chance to spend all day outside is one of the best things about it. If you don't suit traditional academia, take a look at agricultural colleges and see if there's a course that inspires you.

For more information: visit **chichester.ac.uk/brinsbury**, or phone **01243 786 321**

Student Profile:

ZEPHANIAH LINDO, CAPEL MANOR COLLEGE

How did you choose your place of study?
I was looking for somewhere to consolidate my skills as a gardener and support them with a qualification. A bit of research quickly proved that Capel Manor held the reputation as a centre of excellence. I also looked at the past students and saw that many of them had progressed on to great things in the world of horticulture in its many forms.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?
It's all about the plants: getting to know new plants intimately, understanding their characteristics and using them to create beautiful gardens.

What part of the course has been the most rewarding?
Building my knowledge and skill has led to a growing confidence and firm conviction in what I do in the garden. Understanding that learning gives you a framework from which you can try things and be creative and experimental in the garden frees you from much apprehension and doubt.

How has doing the course changed your career?
For me it has led to creating medal-winning gardens at Chelsea Flower Show, becoming a presenter on Gardeners' World and writing for various gardening and wildlife magazines. I also work as a lecturer giving me the opportunity to help influence hundreds of future gardens and gardeners, guiding them to the joy that caring for a piece of our planet can bring.

Garden designed by Cassandra Crouch

CAPEL MANOR COLLEGE

"My training at Capel was a wonderful experience and gave me a great understanding of the practicalities of garden design as well as the creative and horticultural considerations."
– Former Capel student

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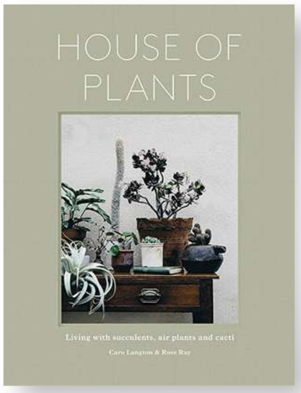
Book reviews, crossword, back issues, shop, reader offer

A stunning example of a Mexican fan palm, *Washingtonia robusta*. One of the plants discussed in *House of Plants*, reviewed on page 104.

ERIKA RAXWORTHY

Book reviews



HOUSE OF PLANTS

by Caro Langton and Rose Ray

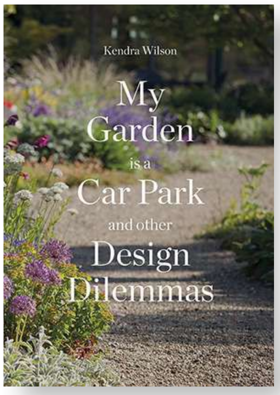
Frances Lincoln, £20
ISBN 978-0711238374

A beautiful, practical manual to help indoor gardeners nurture, style and share those ever so trendy succulents, air plants and cacti.

Reviewer Rosanna Morris is a freelance writer and editor.

Who would have thought the spider plant – that mainstay of 1970s interiors – would return with such reverence? Yet it has, thanks in part to devotees, such as authors Caro Langton and Rose Ray. A new trend for terrariums and succulents sees many of us pairing house plants with whitewashed walls, industrial décor and mid-century furniture. Langton and Ray, who are neither gardeners nor botanists but friends with backgrounds in design, started combining indoor gardening with interior decoration when Langton inherited her grandmother's house on London's Hampstead Heath. The property came with a collection of ancient cacti, succulents and tropical plants and the friends dug out gardening books in the study to identify and nurture these tenants. Before long, they were hooked and started a business selling plants and vessels in which to display them.

In this useful and beautiful guide, the newly fashionable plants featured include the Chinese money plant, the asparagus fern, the rubber plant and the donkey tail. The book is practical – covering pruning, care, propagation, conditions and ideal positions – but also includes home styling ideas and guides on such subjects as how to construct a himmeli mobile for air plants. The style ideas are reinforced by firm plant knowledge, including profiles of several species detailing botanical name, origin, growing conditions and a useful tip, all complemented with lavish photographs and illustrations. As someone with a knack for killing house plants, I now have the confidence to fill that empty glass vessel in my living room, perhaps with a Moon Valley friendship plant. And I just might be able to resurrect my Boston fern from near death, too.



MY GARDEN IS A CAR PARK AND OTHER DESIGN DILEMMAS

by Kendra Wilson

Laurence King Publishing,
£12.99
ISBN 978-1780679259

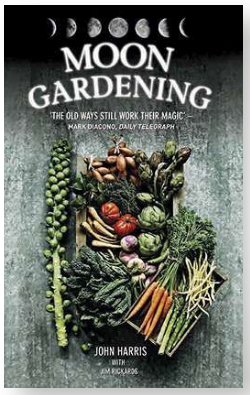
Kendra Wilson shows how to make the best of a tricky situation in this beautifully presented and accessible guide.

Reviewer Jonny Bruce is a gardener at Kwekerij De Hessenhof.

The most recent offering of that most stylish of garden writers Kendra Wilson enters a crowded field. As a nation not only of gardeners but of garden consumers, we seem to have an insatiable appetite for design guides that publishers are only too happy to feed. It was a relief, therefore, when I opened Wilson's book, as it does manage to find a niche.

Many of us will have some weighty tome, from John Brookes or such like, that gets dusted off every few years and then hurriedly returned to obscurity as the scale of the task in hand is realised. Wilson's, however, is not a book for tackling a major renovation but rather a light directory of ideas to trigger inspiration and discussion. We are often, rather patronisingly, advised not to be intimidated by our gardens and this book is unusual in that it succeeds in making those niggling problems seem solvable. It is also unusual in the sheer variety of suggestions. Wilson has forged her career online and is obviously conscious of a society that is ever-more click-happy and, arguably, has an attention span to match. This is publishing for the Pinterest generation – an almost dizzying array of options at your fingertips, all beautifully presented. The writing is logical and clear, and, combined with high-quality images, conveys, as Wilson rightly puts it, 'surprisingly simple ideas that can solve complex dilemmas'.

Not all of this book will be relevant to everyone (if you're worried about your garden being too small, you're unlikely to concern yourself with the woes of an apple glut), but its compact format makes it handy to pass on to a friend. Wilson has produced a book that will allow those who feel daunted by their garden to discover, or rediscover, the fun of gardening.


MOON GARDENING
'THE OLD WAYS STILL WORK THEIR MAGIC' – MARK DIACONO, DAILY TELEGRAPH
JOHN HARRIS
WITH JIM RICKARDS

MOON GARDENING

by John Harris
with Jim Rickards

John Blake Publishing, £12.99
ISBN 978-1784184155

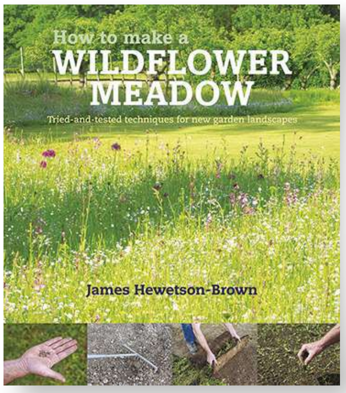
An enjoyable and encouraging introduction to the theories and practice of gardening in tune with the phases of the moon.

Reviewer Lia Leendertz is a garden writer and allotmenteer.

The practice of gardening in tune with the phases of the moon is slowly emerging from the hippy ghetto and entering the mainstream, thanks to enthusiastic and well-respected practitioners such as Charles Dowding. John Harris has been gardening by the moon at Tresillian in Cornwall since the early 1980s, and has created a beautiful garden filled with award-winning produce. This book is a history of how he came to Tresillian and how he began to practise moon gardening. It is also a guide to gardening by the moon on your own patch.

It is a book of two halves and the history comes first, as told by Jim Rickards, who writes about Harris's life in a chatty, enjoyable style. Those just interested in the nuts and bolts of moon gardening could skip this part, but it gives a fine sense of Harris's character and his determination to go against the horticultural grain and to follow his own observations, all at a time when anything but the wisdom of chemically treated vegetables was considered wildly wacky.

Next we move on to the basis and practice of gardening by the moon: the theories about what is happening to the soil and the groundwater during each phase of the moon, and the ways in which this might affect plants. Harris suggests jobs for each phase of the cycle, with good and clear explanations of why they might work better then than at other times. He also discusses other aspects of organic vegetable gardening – rotation, soil care, fertilising – making it a good book for beginners too. You feel that you are in the hands of a grower with a deep understanding of seasons and plants. With its promises of less work and greater crop yields, this book has certainly nudged me to give moon gardening a try myself this year.



HOW TO MAKE A WILDFLOWER MEADOW

by James Hewetson-Brown

Filbert Press, £20
ISBN 978-0993389238

A manual on installing and maintaining meadows that will be of use to both keen gardeners and professional landscapers.

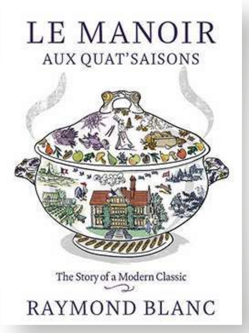
Reviewer Rory Dusoir is a Kew-trained gardener and writer.

Wildflower meadows have seen a considerable revival in British horticulture over recent decades. Gardeners have been encouraged to consider ecological issues and have come to accept the wilder aesthetic associated with semi-natural plant communities. This is perhaps more than half the battle, but there are still plenty of ways to fail when it comes to installing and maintaining flowering grassland.

One of the things to admire about this book is that it is quite frank about these difficulties. Wildflower meadows require little maintenance once up and running, but Hewetson-Brown is at pains to point out that there are pitfalls, especially in the establishment phase, that must be overcome through attentiveness and hard work if the project is to succeed. His point is that the aggravation and disappointment created by a failed project is ultimately more off-putting than a few stern words before you start.

The author is an industry leader in the supply and installation of wildflower turf (with his company Wildflower Turf) and has been involved in some high-profile and technically demanding projects, including Dan Pearson's award-winning Chatsworth Garden (Chelsea Flower Show 2015) and the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics. These and other projects, many of which have been monitored over several years, are highlighted in the case studies that form an important part of the book. All methods of establishment are covered, from a patient naturalisation process, through seeding and 'wildflower earth', to turfing, which brings almost instant results. In all, the book is grounded in some serious practical experience, is written well and transmits a great deal of enthusiasm for the subject.

Book reviews


LE MANOIR
AUX QUAT'SAISONS
The Story of a Modern Classic
RAYMOND BLANC

LE MANOIR AUX QUAT'SAISONS
by Raymond Blanc

Bloomsbury, £50
ISBN 978-1408816905

An insight into the heart of Le Manoir and a collection of classic recipes for the passionate cook who'd like to broaden their skills.

Reviewer Alys Hurn is editorial assistant for Gardens Illustrated.

If you, like myself, have never had the opportunity to visit Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons but have always admired the passion of chef patron Raymond Blanc and the food he cooks, this book will give you a glimpse of the experience that many can only afford once in a lifetime.

In the introduction, Blanc gives an entertaining and honest account of his journey from the Franche-Comté region of France, where he was taught by his parents the importance of growing and using seasonal vegetables, to Oxford, where he found a property that gave him the space to grow his own produce and create dishes that stay true to his childhood values. The now famous gardens at Le Manoir are home to more than 250 types of vegetable.

Seasonality takes precedence and each section of recipes, which are divided by season, begins with an explanation of how the gardens inspire the restaurant's menu at each time of year and ends with a description of how the rooms at the hotel reflect the seasons. The book is illustrated with large, glossy photographs throughout.

Much like the author himself, the dishes served in the restaurant have celebrity status (the *essence de tomates*, for example, is a legend unto itself) and attempting to cook them is a daunting prospect. However, if you ignore the intimidating (albeit beautiful) photography and concentrate on reading the recipes, you quickly realise that these elegant dishes are created using simple ingredients. A few of the more complex dishes do require you to assemble a number of separate elements before putting the final dish together, but, if you are an ambitious cook who likes a challenge, this won't deter you. The book ends with useful, basic recipes from chicken stock to pasta dough and brioche.

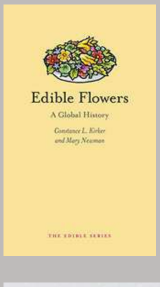
A good buy if you want to broaden your cooking skills. □

Other books

Discover the history of flowers, the life of a gardening great, capital green spaces and a sustainable way of gardening.

Orchid
a cultural history
Jim Endersby

ORCHID: A CULTURAL HISTORY
by Jim Endersby
University of Chicago Press, £21.99
ISBN 978-1842466292
A look at the stories of orchids throughout history, divided into four key themes: science, empire, sex and death.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Constance L. Kirker and Mary Newman

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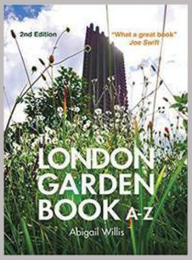
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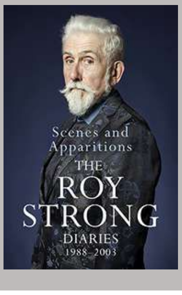
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THE ROY STRONG DIARIES
1988-2003

SCENES AND APPARITIONS: THE ROY STRONG DIARIES 1988-2003
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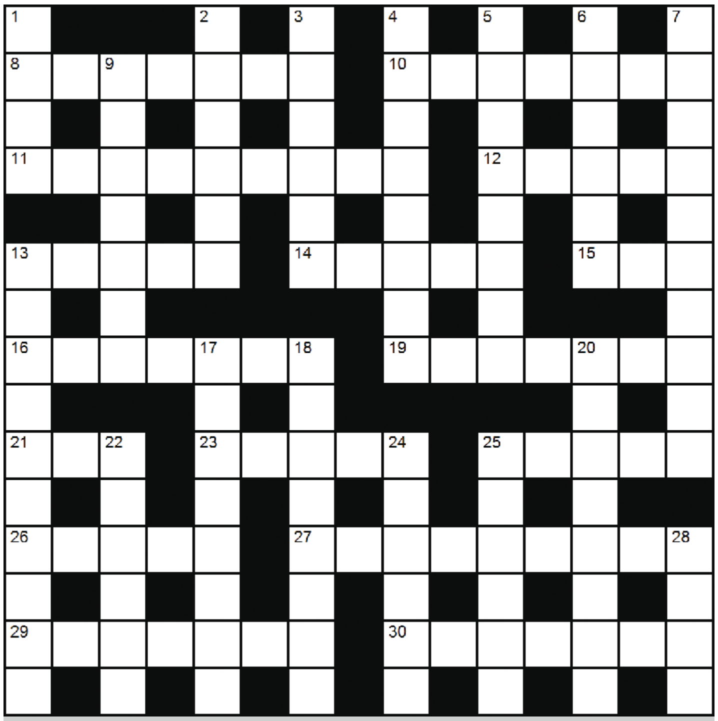
Crossword



ACROSS
8 Lettuce genus – actual 'C' variety (7)
10 Possibly admire a plant also called 'Angel's Fishing Rods' (7)
11 Hybrid tea-type rose with golden flowers once commonly featured on coins (9)
12 ___ plant: common name for Chilean *Berberidopsis* (part of reef) (5)
13 British PC name for a type of green bean! (5)
14 Flower part, primula initially, late to develop (5)
15/22 Group of mildew-resistant impatiens from Papua (3,6)
16 Trim southern conifers of *Picea* genus (7)
19 Grape hyacinth genus (7)
21 In short, greens etc in Highgrove garden (3)
23 Carefully, Richard conceals a fuchsia cultivar (5)
25 Exposes, we hear, and produces fruit (5)
26 Bulb that may produce a tear? (5)
27 Tansy genus can mutate oddly (9)
29 Nowhere, sadly, produces a reverse bicolour sweet pea (7)
30 A golden-yellow narcissus with long trumpet – sheer joy! (7)

DOWN
1 Mace, possibly, but not the spice (4)
2 Like an aphid's honeydew secretion (6)
3 *Nepeta*, herb attractive to Tom? (6)
4 Admit Una revised the genus of maidenhair fern (8)
5 Horse chestnut genus causes changes around middle of July (8)
6 Some *Liquidambar* rendered infertile (6)
7 Foxglove trees – ruined, alas, I own up (10)
9 Eg clematis or vine, one in the ascendant (7)
13 Common name for a *Browallia* – love his tub arrangement (4,6)
17 An orchid genus – spherical anthers in part! (8)
18 Vigorous Dutch honeysuckle, *Lonicera periclymenum* '_____', is ornate, possibly (8)
20 Genus of eg Bear's breeches ... in Africa can't hustle (8)
22 See 15 across
24 Cardoon genus wrecks any car! (6)
25 Small-flowering plant in *Sutera* genus – found in cheapo cabbages, reversed (6)
28 Demeanour ... of __ Ruys, Dutch garden designer (4)

SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED NEXT MONTH

SOLUTIONS TO SPECIAL ISSUE 2016 CROSSWORD

ACROSS 1 Pitcher plant **8** Goliath **12** Vervain **13** Aurea **14** Cherry **15** Albino **16** Sedum **18** Diseased **19** Cymes **21** Trugs **22** Glee club **23** Sempervivum **25** Nicotiana **28** Amberboa **29** Bottle brush **32** Macleaya **34** Liner **35** Air pot **37** Ice plant **39** Waste **41** Sashes **42** Wreath **43** Snaps **45** Heather **46** Baptisia **47** Ladys slipper.

DOWN 2 Involucre **3** Cirsium **4** Erato **5** Pinks **6** Ada **7** Tiramisu **8** Gland **9** Lycaste **10** Amelanchier **11** Harlequin **17** Daucus **20** Sorer **21** Triloba **22** Glitter **24** Pebble plant **26** Omega **27** Cornus **28** Araucaria **30** Smoke tree **31** Blowball **33** Agathis **36** Rosehip **38** Tessa **40** Ethos **41** Snail **44** Sod.

JANUARY'S SOLUTION

ACROSS 5 Tease **6** Scallions **9** Rot **10** Gorse **11** Bolts **12** Freesia **14** Solanum **15** Spurge **17** Plants **20** Nutgall **22** Nemesia **24** Siren **25** Lotus **26** Wet **27** Equisetum **28** Ivies.
DOWN 1 Tart **2** Hedges **3** Waters **4** Pollinates **5** Thrift **6** Serrate **7** Lobelia **8** Sesame **13** Eupatorium **16** Rhamnus **17** Pinetum **18** Aniseed **19** Cactus **21** Lolita **23** Mosaic **26** Whin.

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Reader offers

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February is the perfect time to look at your own garden and consider planting additions or changes you might want to make. For inspiration take a look at garden designer and principal of The English Gardening School Rosemary Alexander's selection of 100 plants featured this month (see page 37). Key to her choice was that she had grown these plants in her garden, which means that all are guaranteed to be garden worthy.

Once you've gathered your ideas from Rosemary's list you can then take advantage of this special 15 per cent discount from online plant nursery Crocus and really get your growing season off to a great start.

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Please note Offer valid for plants and seed only featured on crocus.co.uk. All plants are subject to availability. While Crocus stocks a large range of plants, it doesn't necessarily stock all 100 of Rosemary's selection. To find suppliers of specific cultivars, please use the RHS Plant Finder book or rhs.org.uk/Plants/Search-Form to locate alternative suppliers. Offer excludes all garden products and machinery, as well as gift vouchers and delivery.

TORIE CHUGG, JASON INGRAM, SHARON PEARSON, RACHEL WARNE

Daphne bholua 'Jacqueline Postill'.

Stipa gigantea.

Salvia nemorosa 'Caradonna'.

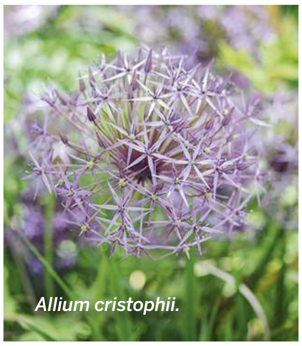
Geranium Rozanne.

Corylopsis pauciflora.

Geum 'Totally Tangerine'.

Cornus sanguinea 'Midwinter Fire'.

Eryngium giganteum.



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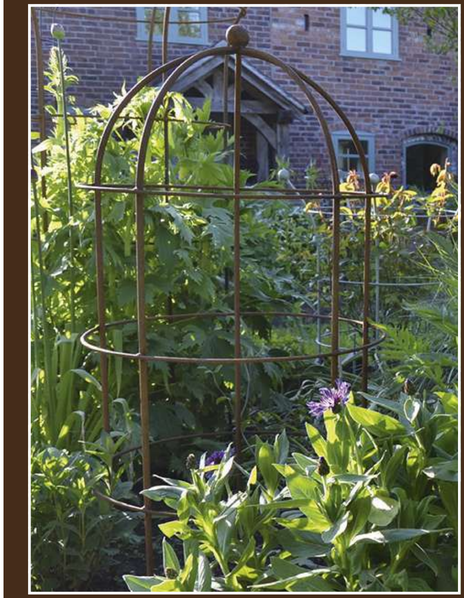

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Spectacular snowdrops

Nothing represents the beauty of winter quite like a breathtaking snowdrop display, and here are some of the finest Britain has to offer. Make the trip and indulge.

1. CHIPPENHAM PARK

Chippenham Park offers over 35 acres of spectacular woodland, lakes and gardens. In February, much of the woodland walks are carpeted in a magnificent display of snowdrops and aconites. A mass of hellebores, fiery dogwoods and exceptional trees make this a truly inspirational time to visit. Open 10am-4pm, 11 February-3 March, £5. See website for more opening dates.

ADDRESS **Chippenham, Cambridgeshire CB7 5PT**
TEL **01638 721416**
WEB **chippenhamparkgardens.co.uk**

2. FORDE ABBEY & GARDENS

Throughout February the 30 acres of award-winning gardens are carpeted in a spectacular display of snowdrops. Weather pending, the camellias will be in full bloom on the Mount along with an abundance of hellebores and early spring bulbs making an appearance. Gardens open daily from 10am-4pm, tearooms and gift shop open every weekend throughout February.

ADDRESS **Chard, Somerset TA20 4LU**
TEL **01460 220231**
WEB **fordeabbey.co.uk**

3. CHIRK CASTLE – NATIONAL TRUST

Chase away those winter blues with a walk around Chirk Castle's award-winning gardens and take in the carpet of delicate snowdrops in the Pleasure Ground. Warm your hands over the fire in the Woodsman's Hut, enjoy early spring bulbs throughout the gardens, explore the medieval tower, or visit the shop and cafe. On weekends also enjoy guided conservation tours of our State Rooms.

ADDRESS **Chirk, Wrexham LL14 5AF**
TEL **01691 777701**
WEB **nationaltrust.org.uk/chirk-castle**

4. WELFORD PARK

A spectacular opportunity to see snowdrops carpeting a beech wood and the banks of the River Lambourn. Find many galanthus cultivars in the formal garden with hellebores, acconites and winter flowering shrubs, Specialist Plant Fair (see website for nursery details) 23 February. Open 1 February-5 March, Wednesday-Sunday, 11am-4pm. Closed Mondays and Tuesdays.

ADDRESS **Welford Park, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 8HU**
TEL **01488 608691**
WEB **welfordpark.co.uk**

5. WATERPERRY GARDENS

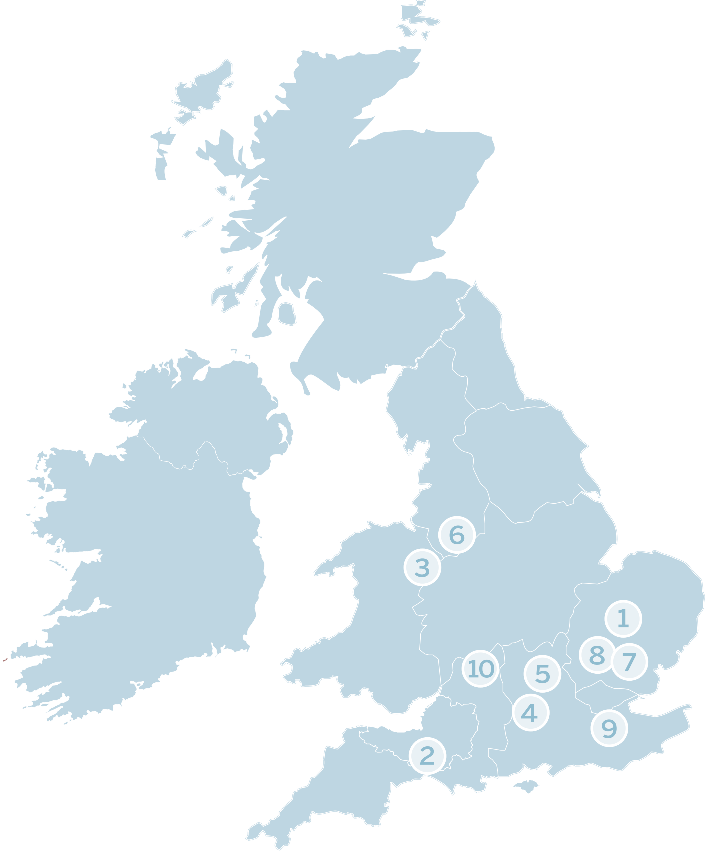
Celebrate the first signs of spring with Snowdrop Weekends at Waterperry Gardens on 18-19 and 25-26 February. The ornamental gardens will be carpeted with more than 30 varieties of snowdrop. A place to explore, relax and shop in beautiful surroundings. Open 10am-5pm Jan-March, 10am-5.30pm April-Oct. Party bookings welcome by arrangement.

ADDRESS **Waterperry, Near Wheatley, Oxfordshire OX33 1LA**
TEL **01844 339254**
WEB **waterperrygardens.co.uk**

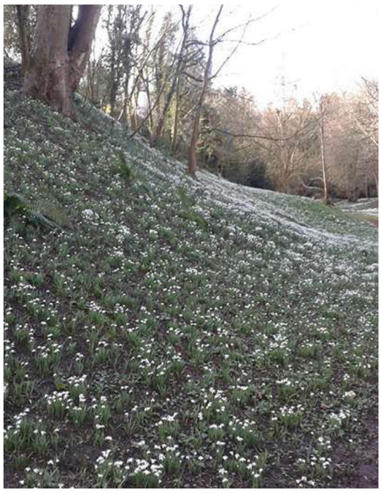
6. RODE HALL & GARDENS

Experience one of the UK's finest Snowdrop Walks at Rode Hall and Gardens in Cheshire to mark the start of spring. A beautiful end of winter walk for all the family with a wonderfully diverse landscape and over 70 varieties of snowdrops. Homemade light lunches and cream teas available. Group bookings welcome by appointment. Sat 4 Feb-Sun 5 March, Tues-Sun 11am-4pm.

ADDRESS **Church Lane, Scholar Green, Cheshire ST7 3QP**
TEL **01270 873237**
WEB **rodehall.co.uk**



7. HEDINGHAM CASTLE



The Castle's winter gardens are possibly the most romantic in the East of England, with at least 13 varieties of snowdrops covering the steep slopes of the motte and bailey and setting off the trees and lakes in front of the Georgian Mansion House. Open on the 5, 12 and 19 of February, from 11am-4pm.

ADDRESS **Castle Hedingham, Halstead, Essex CO9 3DJ**
TEL **01787 460261**
WEB **hedinghamcastle.co.uk**

8. BENINGTON LORDSHIP GARDENS

The ruins of a Norman castle and a Victorian gatehouse folly serve as a spectacular backdrop to the stunning display of naturalised snowdrops at Benington Lordship. The walled garden and borders showcase the collection of 200 varieties. Snowdrops and hellebores for sale. Homemade soup, tea and cakes. Free parking. Open daily 8 Feb-5 March 2017, 12-4pm. £5 entry, children free.

ADDRESS **Benington, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG2 7BS**
TEL **01438 869668**
WEB **beningtonlordship.co.uk**

9. HEVER CASTLE & GARDENS

Follow a snowdrop trail through the grounds of Hever Castle, once the childhood home of Anne Boleyn, and enjoy the early blossoms of camellia and quince in the award-winning gardens. Meander along the paths for fabulous snowdrop displays and enjoy blankets of these delicate flowers alongside the double moat that surrounds the 700-year-old castle.

ADDRESS **Hever, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 7NG**
TEL **01732 865224**
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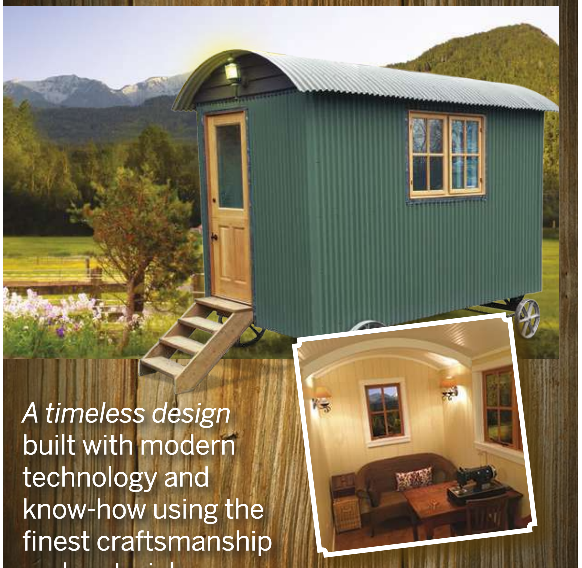

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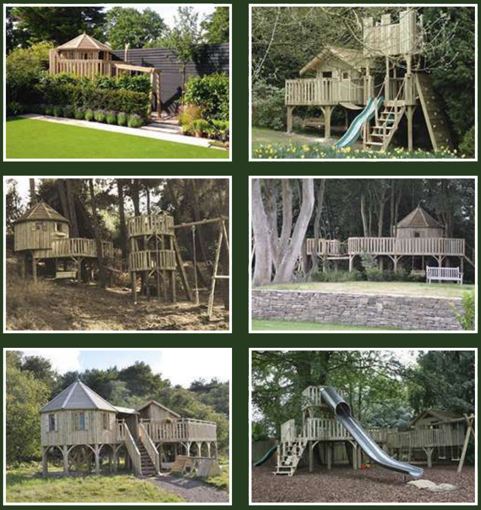

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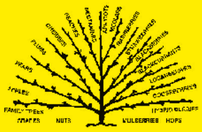

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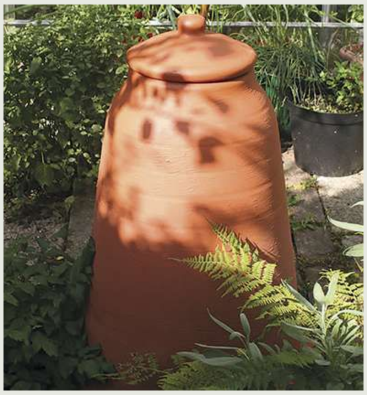

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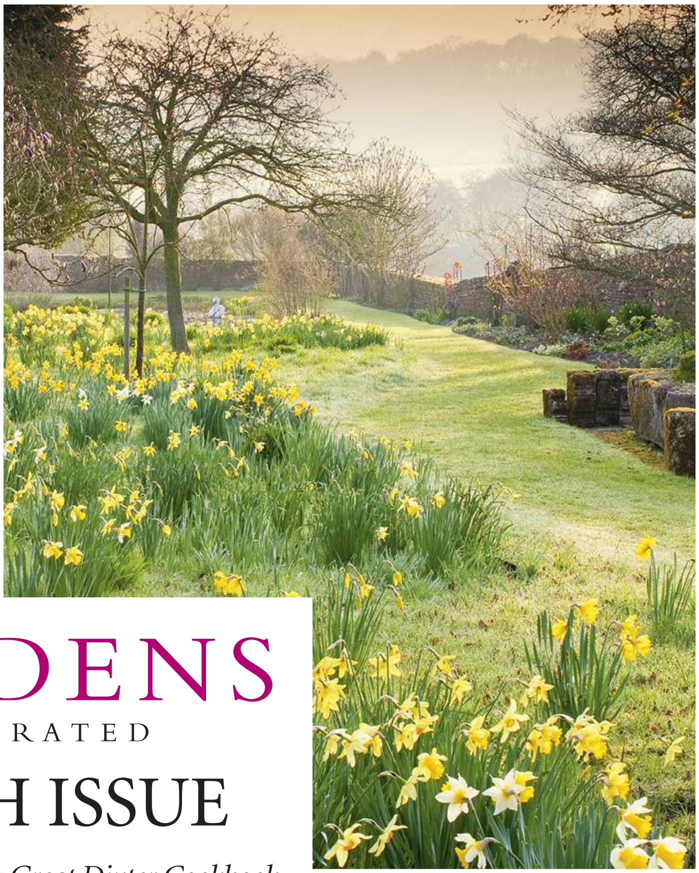

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Burning desire

Frank has fallen for a beautiful native shrub for his Californian garden but the latest object of his desire comes with a fearsome and fiery reputation

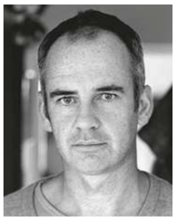
WORDS **FRANK RONAN** ILLUSTRATION **CELIA HART**

Of the four elements fire is probably the one we think of least in the garden. In California it strikes fear into the hearts of all as we watch plumes of smoke from wildfires on the other side of the mountains, and count our blessings that it has not come to our valley, yet. One careless spark and the neighbourhood is lost and, judging by the rates at which the insurance companies are jacking up the premiums, it is only a matter of time.

I might not be so open minded about the beauty of this native were I shivering in a silver blanket in a school gymnasium

That, to a great extent, is because this landscape was designed to burn periodically and has for millennia, long before it was dotted with flammable houses. The fact of it is proven by the germination requirements of some of its commonest plants, which produce seed cases that are adamantine by almost any other natural means.

I am thinking, as is often the case, of the manzanita, a shrub I have mentioned before, best represented in this locality by a particularly fine form of *Arctostaphylos glauca*. It is a thing of great beauty; of silver leaves and oxblood bark, and seems immune to anything the climate can throw at it. Surprised by a general absence in gardens and nurseries, I subsequently found out that it had been fingered as an agent in the spread of wildfires, and labelled with the dread term 'ladder species' meaning that it would lead the flames from ground level to the crowns of trees, causing the most intense conflagrations. Perhaps more damningly, it has been classified as a pyrophyte, which is a plant that burns more vigorously than others, safe in the knowledge that its progeny will be the first to regenerate in the wake of an immolation.



Frank Ronan is a novelist who gardens in both the UK and USA.

Poor arctostaphylos, having evolved the most cunning of survival strategies, only to be demonised by the Johnny-come-lately humans, who cannot bear that the survival of any other species should compete with our own. I speak, of course, from the luxury of not having been burned out of house and home yet, and might not be so open minded about the beauty of this native were I shivering in a silver blanket in a school gymnasium. But I am where I am and still I would like to take my chances with growing a specimen or two.

By the time I eventually found nurseries that sold good selected forms, my sights were already set on the progeny of a specific tree halfway up the Matilija Canyon, where we took a walk in late summer and collected a pocketful of seed. Husked, the remaining shell could have been mistaken for the edible part of a hazelnut, were it not as hard as brass, but light and hollow at the same time. They sat in a pot on my desk while I worked out what to do next.

The answer, by universal agreement, was that they were to be burnt. I had scarified before; had scratched, pierced, soaked, frozen and chipped, but had never actually set fire to a seed. At first I had to work out what the vessel would be. Plastic and wood were out for the obvious reasons. Terracotta seemed a good option, the flames being unlikely to reach a higher temperature than a potter's kiln. So I filled a large pot with compost and spaced the seed on the surface, then made a pile of dry pine needles over, with a screw of paper in the middle to get them going.

The flame was among the most beautiful I have ever seen. More like a cartoon fire than a real fire. Pure orange abstract cut-outs danced slowly in a column three feet high, with little smoke and great heat. Almost as suddenly as it started it resolved to a mound of smoking grey threads, and I from worrying that it was burning too long to whether it had burned enough. And now I am waiting, watching and wondering if I am watering too much and whether my terrible beauties will really hatch. □

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